

COLLABORATION IN ESTONIAN RURAL TOURISM

KOOSTÖÖ EESTI MAATURISMIS

TARMO PILVING

A Thesis
for applying for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Agriculture

Väitekirj
filosoofiadoktori kraadi taotlemiseks
põllumajanduse erialal

Tartu 2021

Eesti Maaülikooli doktoritööd

**Doctoral Theses of the
Estonian University of Life Sciences**

COLLABORATION IN ESTONIAN RURAL TOURISM

KOOSTÖÖ EESTI MAATURISMIS

TARMO PILVING

A Thesis
for applying for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Agriculture

Väitekirj
filosoofiadoktori kraadi taotlemiseks
põllumajanduse erialal

Tartu 2021

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

Estonian University of Life Sciences

According to verdict No 6-14/8-2, 29. 04. 2021, the Doctoral Committee of the Agricultural Sciences of the Estonian University of Life Sciences has accepted this thesis for defence of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Agriculture.

Opponent: Prof. **Katarzyna Czernek-Marszałek**, PhD
University of Economics in Katowice

Supervisors: **Ants-Hannes Viira**, PhD
Estonian University of Life Sciences
Prof. Tiit Kull, PhD
Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia
Assist. Prof. **Monika Suškevičs**, PhD
Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia

Defence of the thesis:

Estonian University of Life Sciences, Kreutzwaldi 1A, Tartu, on June 11, 2021 at 10.15 (web-based).

The English language was edited by Dan O'Connell

The Estonian language was edited by Urve Ansip.

Publication of this thesis is supported by the Estonian University of Life Sciences and the Doctoral School of Economics and Innovation (Estonian University of Life Sciences ASTRA project 'Value-chain based bio-economy').



Euroopa Liit
Euroopa struktuuri-
ja investeerimisfondid



Eesti
tuleviku heaks

© Tarmo Pilving, 2021

ISSN 2382-7076

ISBN 978-9949-698-84-4

ISBN 978-9949-698-85-1 (pdf)

CONTENTS

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS.....	7
ABBREVIATIONS.....	8
1. INTRODUCTION.....	9
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
2.1 Rural tourism from a regional perspective	15
2.2 Tourism networks.....	16
2.3 The role of identities in tourism collaboration	18
2.4 Cyclical evolvement of the tourism collaboration life cycle.....	20
2.5 Theories used in tourism collaboration research.....	22
3. AIMS OF THE STUDY	26
4. MATERIALS AND METHODS	27
4.1 Research areas.....	27
4.2 Sampling and data collection.....	30
4.3 Methodological approach and data analysing process.....	35
5. RESULTS.....	39
5.1 The nature of collaborative ties and relationships in the regional collaborative networking	39
5.2 Individual identity relations with shared collaborative identity on the collaborative platform	42
5.3 Rural tourism collaboration life cycle development processes...	47
5.4 Evolution of tourism collaboration in the Pärnu region.....	49
6. DISCUSSION.....	53
6.1 Post-communist collaboration environment.....	53
6.2 Collaborative ties between regional tourism entrepreneurs and networks	54
6.3 The importance of the governing body in joint rural-urban networking	59
6.4 The role of a collaborative platform in tourism collaboration development	60

6.5 Shared collaborative identity creation and the role of individual identities in this process	62
6.6 The life cycle of a rural tourism collaboration	66
6.7 The interplay between informal and formal tourism collaboration	68
7. CONCLUSIONS	71
REFERENCES	79
APPENDICES	95
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN	103
ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS	125
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	213
CURRICULUM VITAE	214
ELULOOKIRJELDUS	218
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	225

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

The following thesis is based on publications that are referred to by their Roman numerals in the text. The articles in this thesis are reproduced with the kind permission of the publishers.

- I Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Diverse networks in regional tourism: rural and urban collaboration perspective. *European Journal of Tourism Research*.
- II Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Creating shared collaborative tourism identity in a post-communist environment. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2021.1893214>
- III Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2019). The tourism partnership life cycle in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 219-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>

Paper	Idea	Design	Data collection	Data analysis	Manuscript preparation
I	TP	TP , TK, MS, AHV	TP	TP	TP , TK, MS, AHV
II	TP	TP , TK, MS, AHV	TP	TP	TP , TK, MS, AHV
III	TP	TP , TK, MS, AHV	TP	TP	TP , TK, MS, AHV

TP– Tarmo Pilving

TK– Tiiu Kull

MS– Monika Suškevičs

AHV– Ants-Hannes Viira

ABBREVIATIONS

ANT	Actor network theory
DMO	Destination management organisation
EU	European Union
GT	Grounded theory
LNP	Lahemaa National Park
MGT	Multi-grounded theory
RC	Romantic Coastline
SNA	Social network analysis
SNT	Social network theory
ST	Stakeholder theory
TPLCM	Tourism Partnership Life Cycle Model

1. INTRODUCTION

In Estonia, tourism based on market economy principles began after the restoration of independence in 1991 when the global tourism market opened (Jaakson, 1996; Worthington, 2001). Nowadays, Estonia is still a developing destination in the global context (Cottrell & Raadik-Cottrell, 2015). Major institutional changes have impacted rural areas during the transition period and the labour market for agricultural activities has declined. During this change, new sources of income are needed, especially in rural areas (Viira et al., 2009). These changes have increased the role of tourism in rural development (Unwin, 1996), which started to boom in the early 2000s when Estonia joined the EU. Becoming a member of the EU provided new funding opportunities and opened borders to new visitors (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008). Nowadays, most Estonian rural tourism enterprises are small businesses that offer a mix of accommodation, food and catering, and active holiday services and guiding (I, II, III). Despite the fast growth in the early 2000s, tourism outside of the major tourism hotspots of Tallinn and Pärnu (Statistics Estonia, 2020) still lags in development. Rural tourism in Estonia is faced with several challenges e.g., enterprises have low investment capacity, the development of the sector depends largely on the EU funded or co-funded programmes, the product and service offering is highly seasonal, and entrepreneurs face difficulties in finding a qualified workforce (Hillep et al., 2012). Collaborative networking is considered a way to overcome these challenges. However, previous literature shows that trust levels in post-communist societies are low, and a lack of collaboration history and tradition hinders collaborative networking (Bjørnskov, 2007; Czernek, 2013).

Collaboration and partnerships are important for fostering the development of community-based rural tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Collaboration ‘occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain’ (Wood & Gray, 1991, p.146). Partnerships are: ‘the collaborative efforts of autonomous stakeholders from organisations in two or more sectors with interests in tourism development who engage in an interactive process using shared rules, norms and structures at an agreed organisational level and over a defined geographical area to act or

decide on issues related to tourism development' (Long, 1997, p. 239). These definitions have the same meaning in the context of this thesis.

Collaboration between the stakeholders is important because it helps to combine resources, increase the resilience of actors to shocks and offer a competitive edge to a destination and innovative experiences to visitors (Jesus & Franco, 2016; Luthe & Wyss, 2014; Van der Zee et al., 2017). Tourism collaboration has been well researched in different environments (e.g., Beritelli, 2011; Caffyn, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Jesus & Franco, 2016; Kernel, 2005; Lemmetyinen & Go, 2009; Peroff, et al., 2017; Vogt et al., 2016). Previous studies (Augustyn & Knowles, 2000; Bornhorst et al., 2010; Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) of collaboration in tourism have focused on the elements that influence the dynamic evolution of the collaboration, primarily funding, relationships, communication, leadership, management and the formal or informal character of the collaboration.

Tourism collaborations are framed by the environment in which they exist. A number of studies have focused on tourism collaboration in post-communist countries including Bulgaria, Romania and Poland (Czaron & Czernek, 2016; Czernek, 2013; Czernek & Czaron, 2016; Czernek et al., 2017; Kapera, 2018; Roberts & Simpson, 2000; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). However, the Baltic states have not been in the foreground in academic literature (Cottrell & Raadik-Cottrell, 2015) and there are still many unanswered questions regarding collaboration networking in a tourism context. More knowledge on the phenomena can answer how collaborative relationships develop between diverse regional stakeholders, what keeps stakeholders in the collaboration, how those relationships can be mutually beneficial, why collaborations start to change and eventually fade, and what elements influence the collaboration process and its sustainability. The purpose of this thesis is to identify what affects the evolution and sustainability of rural tourism collaboration between diverse stakeholders in Estonia.

There have been numerous attempts in Estonia to initiate and sustain rural tourism collaboration on a larger scale with a more formal framework, but these initiatives have largely failed or faded. There are private, public and non-profit sectors as well as a variety of different stakeholders involved in tourism who are connected with each other and who may or may not operate in isolation (Graci, 2013). Rural tourism does not exist

in isolation, and it has some connections with the surrounding areas and other regional networks. Usually, there are urban areas within the greater tourism region. In recent years, one study of note from Portugal (Jesus & Franco, 2016) focused on rural and urban networking. However, this topic also requires attention within the context of the post-communist tourism environment, where rural-urban tourism networking is highlighted in regional strategies but there are not many successful examples of such collaborations. If there is a strategic aim to better connect rural and urban stakeholders, these two groups of actors should collaborate to improve the competitiveness of the tourist region in the wider tourism market, and in attracting investors (Tremblay, 1998). This kind of networking helps to share knowledge, information and other resources to fulfil aims that are difficult to achieve when entrepreneurs are acting in isolation (Beritelli, 2011). Through this kind of networking, the fragmentation and geographical spread related challenges of tourism enterprises can be alleviated (Scott et al., 2008), and stakeholders and rural communities can enjoy the economic and social benefits (Novelli et al., 2006). Van der Zee et al. (2017) points out that tourism collaboration is difficult to foster and sustain on a larger scale between different actor groups and individuals, and success in tourism collaboration can be achieved on a smaller, local scale. Even then, it is difficult because those entrepreneurs that collaborate also compete with each other for clients. Another reason why it is difficult to establish collaboration networking between rural and urban entrepreneurs is that their businesses and social environment differ. Urban tourism enterprises are closer to the main market and operate on a larger scale, while rural tourism entrepreneurs are usually small family-owned or lifestyle enterprises (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016; Dimitrovski et al., 2012). This also suggests that rural and urban enterprises establish collaborative relationships differently. It is known that enterprises operating on a larger scale establish formalised relationships (Czernek et al., 2017), while relationships between rural enterprises are built on trust (III). This also indicates the kind of ties that connect rural and urban entrepreneurs in their business environment. However, there is limited knowledge in academic literature about the diversity of the ties that connect rural and urban tourism entrepreneurs: how rural and urban tourism enterprises can collaborate at regional level, and what is needed to foster such collaboration. Paper I investigates and analyses the nature and the role of collaborative ties, relationships and connections between rural and urban tourism enterprises and networks at regional level.

Tourism shapes the identities of local stakeholders (Light, 2001; Segrestin, 2005). Therefore, it can initiate cultural, social and landscape changes in the local environment (Bożetka, 2013). In the social space, individual and collective identities are in a process of constant interaction (Nunkoo & Cursoy, 2012; Stets & Biga, 2003; Stryker, 1968). When tourism stakeholders initiate collaboration, their social, cultural, entrepreneurial and occupational backgrounds move into the foreground (Bramwell & Lane, 2000), the collaborative process starts to shape their identities (Segrestin, 2005), and they begin to form a shared collaborative identity, which is a form of collective identity (Öberg, 2016). Previous studies (Nunkoo & Cursoy, 2012; Stryker, 1968) have shown that individual identities shape collective identities. In her study, Öberg (2016) focused on how different collective identities relate with shared collaborative identities and pointed out that the collaborative process begins with shared collaborative identity creation, which is needed to facilitate and promote the collaboration and to maintain stakeholders within the collaboration. The problem with a shared collaborative identity is that there is a high diversity of stakeholders who must work together in order to achieve successful collaboration outcomes. However, it is not known how shared collaborative identity forms during the interaction of different individual identities, what creates the shared collaborative identity and how this process is facilitated. Therefore, Paper II explores these questions.

Collaboration networks are, by their nature, temporary, and a process-based approach is needed in order to understand this phenomenon. Often, collaboration is initiated to solve some specific challenge or problem (Caffyn, 2000), but if the regional strategic aim is to foster tourism development on a wider scale this collaborative solution might not be enough (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Some collaboration studies (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Caffyn, 2000; Jap & Anderson, 2007; Peroff et al., 2017; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994) highlight the important role of the tourism collaboration life cycle that creates collaborative relationships. In 2000, Caffyn introduced the tourism partnership life cycle model (TPLCM) – a theoretical framework that helps analyse the life cycle of a tourism collaboration. Caffyn (2000) and Peroff et al. (2017) used the TPLCM and found that the development of a tourism collaboration follows a cyclical pattern and eventually decelerates. They suggested different options for collaboration continuity and showed that it is easier to start and grow a collaboration than sustain it when the collaboration

has matured. So, it is evident that collaboration sooner or later decelerates, ends or continues in the so-called afterlife. During the partnership evolution, it is vital to understand the changes in the collaboration over time because in the most extreme cases it is not clear for the partners as to whether the collaboration is active or not or has ended (Peroff et al., 2017). Caffyn (2000) and Peroff et al. (2017) have described the cyclical development of tourism collaboration, but other development patterns can exist which can help to understand how collaboration reforms and what will happen after the end of the collaboration. Paper III tests the TPLCM in the post-communist rural environment of the Pärnu region of Estonia to find new insights to explain the life cycle of a tourism collaboration network development.

This thesis uses the multi-grounded theory (MGT) (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010) as a novel methodological framework in the field of tourism collaboration research. Compared to the grounded theory (GT) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which is widely used in different scientific fields to gather in-depth insights, the MGT combines different existing theories with new empirical data through theoretical, empirical and internal grounding. This helps to develop a new theory or complement already existing theoretical statements, whereas GT is a purely inductive framework that focuses only on the empirical data and draws new theoretical statements from that. However, this can be limiting and can cause a loss of knowledge (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

Data for this thesis is collected from the Pärnu and Lahemaa tourism regions in Estonia. During the first-round, semi-structured interviews (27) were conducted with rural tourism stakeholders (private, public and non-profit sector) in the rural area of the Pärnu region (Appendix A) (III). This was followed by a second round of semi-structured interviews (10) with urban stakeholders (private, public and non-profit sector) from Pärnu town (Appendix B) (I, II). The third data collection round consisted of a semi-structured focus group interview (9) with tourism stakeholders (private, public and non-profit sector) from Lahemaa National Park (Appendix C) (II). The data was collected between spring 2017 and spring 2018. The questions in the semi-structured interview questionnaires focused on a variety of themes related to tourism collaboration (Appendices A, B, C). These included collaborative ties and relationships, networking and regional destinations, regional tourism development and governance, the role of urban and rural

tourism, tourism entrepreneurship, individual belonging and relations with others in the collaboration context, tourism collaboration evolution and process.

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant literature of previous tourism collaboration studies. Chapter 3 presents the aims and research questions of the thesis. Chapter 4 gives an overview of the methodology, data collection and methods used for the research in the published papers. Chapter 5 presents the main results of the studies presented in Papers I-III. Chapter 6 contains the discussion. Chapter 7 provides the main conclusions, theoretical, managerial and practical implementations, limitations and recommendations for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Rural tourism from a regional perspective

Previous studies on tourism collaboration in post-communist environments indicate that it is difficult to foster calculative, capability- and intention-based trust development (Czakoń & Czernek, 2016). Place identity and residents' connections with the natural surrounding environment influence the perceptions of being empowered through tourism (Strzelecka et al., 2017; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). Better quality collaboration can help to minimise conflicts in the collaboration process (Kopera, 2018). Several studies (Czernek, 2013; Czernek et al., 2017; Roberts & Simpson, 2000) have focused on the factors that impact the success of the collaboration and found that these main factors are economic, socio-cultural, demographic, legal, political and spatial, as well as trust.

Rural tourism development has gained more attention in many European countries in recent years. The main reason for this is that income from agriculture has stagnated and new sources of income can be attained when rural areas are developed as recreational areas. This puts the preservation of cultural heritage, natural values and local communities into the foreground (Eusébio et al., 2017). Tourism must be understood in the context of where it exists (Granovetter, 1985). Rural tourism is a 'type of tourism where people are travelling to the rural area outside of their usual place of residence for vacation, work or another purpose' (Hillep et al., 2012, p.4). In Estonia, a rural area means a village, borough or small town with fewer than 4,000 residents (Hillep et al., 2012). Urban tourism is usually concentrated in larger municipal units such as cities or towns where tourism is highly integrated into other activities that urban areas offer (Ashworth & Paige, 2011; Edwards et al., 2008; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Rural tourism, by contrast, takes place in the countryside, where the primary tourism stakeholders are usually members of that particular small local community, and typical activities involve experiencing or are related to the local culture of that community (Dimitrovski et al., 2012; Jaafar et al., 2015). According to the literature, 'a tourism destination is a geographical unit visited by tourists being a self-contained centre' (Burkart & Medlik, 1974, p. 46), where 'a group of actors is linked by mutual relationships with specific rules, where the

action of each actor influences those of the others so that common objectives must be defined and attained in a coordinated way' (Manente & Minghetti, 2006, p. 23). From a regional perspective, there could be several destinations within that region. The destination offers a certain meaning to local tourism stakeholders and visitors, and it is influenced by the market demand (Framke, 2001). Some destinations are more dependent on tourism than others (Van der Zee et al., 2017). Combining rural and urban tourism on a regional strategic level requires a shift from single operator offers to community-based offers (Salvatore et al., 2018), which can be a difficult task when there are many diverse actor groups, networks and destinations within a tourist region. Kauppi et al. (2009) highlight that the decentralisation of tourism services is a key element to make this change happen.

2.2 Tourism networks

Interpersonal relationships between stakeholders form the entity of tourism networking (Beritelli, 2011; Corte & Aria, 2014; Jesus & Franco, 2016). Stakeholders are involved in the operation of value chains, governance, downscaling, outsourcing and production chains processes (Porter, 1990). Networking encompasses the concepts of power relations, structure and contribution as well as the development of trust, social capital and drivers in the collaboration (Czaron & Czernek, 2016; Del Chiappa & Presenza, 2013). Successful networks need to be governed, and they offer co-learning to stakeholders (Lemmetyinen & Go, 2009). During networking, long-term personal relationships between the actors develop through different stages where they create mutual trust, which culminates in a sustainable and stable network. Mutual trust offers a collaborative advantage (Webster, 1992), which is important in overcoming barriers in local tourism development (Salvatore et al., 2018).

The social side of tourism (Merinero-Rodríguez & Pulido-Fernandez, 2016) indicates that besides financial gain there could be other reasons for establishing collaborative relationships (Peroff et al., 2017). Social interactions influence the formation, development and success of tourism collaboration networks (Czernek, 2013), and they help to facilitate collaborative networking, which helps to build trust and social, intellectual and political capital. During this process, all potential benefits of the involved parties must be considered important (Czernek

& Czakon, 2016). The socialisation process must be facilitated and governed because every stakeholder interaction does not necessarily initiate collaboration (Beritelli, 2011), though ad hoc meetings on problem-solving can start a collaboration (Parker, 2000).

Networks differ in their size, which, in turn, determines how much governance, management and organisational support they need (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Van der Zee et al., 2017). Usually, larger networks are more dependant on management because of the facilitation of diverse aims and the lower trust levels among stakeholders. The network management can be self-organising, or the opposite, one in which an organisational body coordinates every networking activity. Some networks are managed by an administrative organisation while the actions are conducted by the members. Others are managed by a lead organisation with a centralised management structure. The third option is decentralised informal networks, which are managed by their members (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Large networks need interdependent relationships for collective strategic cognition. Without this interdependency, the individual tourism actors focus on their activities alone and do not participate in fostering collective gain (Fyall et al., 2012). Networking on a regional level requires support from a DMO (Bornhorst et al., 2010) because, as Czakon & Czernek (2016) point out that third-party legitimating positively affects trust building. Diverse interest needs facilitation, which is usually provided by the neutral arbiter, e.g., local governments (Jamal & Getz, 1995) or local DMO (Caffyn, 2000). However, for effective management, the aims of the neutral arbiter must coincide with the network (Fyall et al., 2012). A study by London et al. (2021) indicates that strategy implementation requires coordination, governance and leadership; otherwise, it can lead to network fragmentation in a tourism destination.

During the networking process, nodes (e.g., individuals and groups) are connected with ties (e.g., agreements, relationships and communication) (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Interconnections are manifested through the actors' positions, decisions, behaviour or attitudes, which affect each other and the network as a whole (Fyall et al., 2012; Wellman, 1988).

In the network, actors who are located in the periphery have poorer access to regional social circles than those in a better location.

Interaction frequency is an important element through which they can gain knowledge for their activities and engage more in regional tourism (Hatipoglu et al., 2016). This situation is explained by the closeness-centrality concept, which shapes collaborative ties between the actors. When actors are located close to each other, they have better access to the collaboration network (Freeman, 1978). Usually, the central actor collects more power and has better opportunities to collect information than other network members (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). When networks are dense, the stakeholders have better access to other members (Wei et al., 2011). However, a high density in networks can also lead to knowledge redundancy (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). In low density networks, it is difficult for enterprises to build solid connections with others and exchange knowledge, which can lead to the weak overall competitiveness of the whole tourist region (Raisi et al., 2020).

2.3 The role of identities in tourism collaboration

Stets and Biga (2003, p.401) point out that identity is ‘a set of meanings attached to the self that serves as a standard or reference that guides behaviour in situations’.

Identity as an evolutionary phenomenon is both persistent and fragile, exists at different layers, can be described from individual and group perspectives (Bożętko, 2013), relates to the past, present and future (Hall, 1996), and binds the person or group with the surrounding environment (Nunkoo & Cursoy, 2012).

Socialising helps stakeholders to define their surroundings similarly and share their identities (Weick, 1993). Through socialising, individuals know about their own identity and those of other individuals and groups (Beech & Huxham, 2003). A person can have different identities, depending on how the person is involved with surrounding social networks (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Persons define themselves through their relationships with other persons or groups (Haj-Yehia & Erez, 2018). In tourism research, the focus has primarily been on the place and on occupational, environmental and cultural identities (Table 1).

Table 1. The nature of place, occupational, environmental and cultural identities.

Type of identity	Main perspectives
Place	Place identity defines relations between people, the land and surrounding environment and the social practices in a given place (Davis, 2016; Urry, 1990). A common understanding of place, community and relationships between people helps to provide mutual support and sustainability in a tourism region. Place identity has a positive influence on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, performance, entrepreneurial success and support for the community (Hallak et al., 2012).
Occupational	Occupational identity connects an individual's identity to the occupation (Carroll & Lee, 1990). Resource-based occupational identity impacts residents' attitudes towards tourism (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012).
Environmental	Environmental identity is the 'experienced social standing of who we are in relation to, and how we interact with the natural environment' (Weigert, 1997, p. 159) and consists of different meanings that are attached to an individual through interactions with the natural environment (Stets & Biga, 2003). If a stakeholder has common cognition of local natural values, then it has a positive effect on local tourism (Haukeland et al., 2011).
Cultural	Cultural identity forms when community members engage in behavioural practices related to certain worldviews (Shweder et al., 2006). Culture gives meaning to some tourist events such as festivals (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009). However, tourism can also pose a threat to local cultural identity (Wray et al., 2010).
Collaborative	Collaborative identity forms through values and meanings that collaborative actors possess and their commitment to these elements in the collaboration setting (Whetten, 2006; Öberg, 2016).

The development of identities helps in understanding the social situation and decision making (Stets & Biga, 2003). Öberg (2016) focused on shared collaborative identity and argued that participants' agendas during the collaboration are based more on a person's own identity than on the identity of collaboration. It is also argued that the pre-collaboration

history of the participants hinders perceptions of collaborative identity, and collaboration formalisation helps stakeholders to perceive a shared collaborative identity (Stets & Biga, 2003; Öberg, 2016).

Some studies (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017; Selin & Chavez, 1995; Öberg, 2016) show that the formalisation of collaboration can make the existing informal collaboration process more sustainable.

The shared collaborative identity process needs facilitation on a collaborative platform that can be described 'as organisations or programs with dedicate competences and resources for facilitating the creation, adaptation and success of multiple or ongoing collaborative projects or networks' (Ansell & Gash, 2018, p.16).

When regional tourism development aims remain unclear to the stakeholders (Palmer et al., 2013), they can feel a threat to their individual identities (Mason & Cheyne, 2000), which can, in turn, hinder wider regional tourism collaborative networking.

2.4 Cyclical evolvement of the tourism collaboration life cycle

The sustainability of collaboration is important for tourism stakeholders. During the collaborative processes, partner relationships evolve through different stages where the partners create mutual trust; ultimately, this process can produce a sustainable collaboration network. Collaboration at a strategic level requires resources such as lasting relationships, capital and management. If they exist, a collaborative advantage can be created (Webster, 1992).

Caffyn (2000) developed the tourism partnership life cycle model (TPLCM), which is a framework to explain the pre, launch, growth, prime and deceleration phases through which tourism collaboration progresses. These phases follow a cyclical development pattern and can continue in the afterlife phase. The TPLCM is shown in Figure 1.

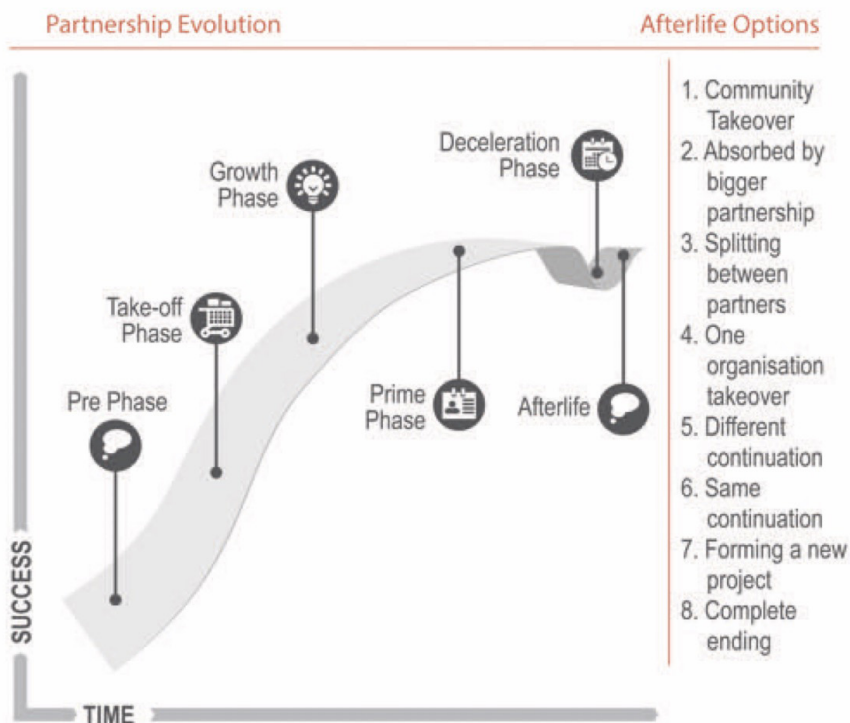


Figure 1. Tourism Partnership Life Cycle Model (Caffyn, 2000).

Tourism collaborations share many similarities during their evolution stage, but their overall life cycles may vary significantly (Caffyn, 2000). The collaboration process can be analysed by identifying the timeline of the collaboration evolution. This timeline also helps to evaluate collaboration performance and success (Peroff et al., 2017).

Some collaboration studies (Caffyn, 2000; Öberg, 2016; Peroff et al., 2017) point out that formal collaborations can be more sustainable. Selin and Chavez (1995) highlight that formalisation can help to more precisely address collective will and aims. Defining collective aims is especially important at the early collaboration stages where the reasons why to engage in collaboration must be clear to all stakeholders. If this is absent, then stakeholders can lose their interest in establishing collaborative relationships.

It is known that confusing aims, uncertainty about the status of the collaboration, unmeasurable targets and lack of communication are

known elements that can cause the deceleration of the collaboration (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017). Long-term implications and success factors in collaboration development are not always in the foreground. However, for long-term solutions, all interests, values and the power relations between different actors must be understood together with what they mean in the context of successful collaboration (Adie et al., 2020).

2.5 Theories used in tourism collaboration research

Different theoretical approaches have been applied in studying and analysing tourism collaboration and networks (Table 2).

Table 2. Theories used in tourism collaboration studies (Fyall et al., 2012).

Name	Sub-theories
Resource-based theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource-dependency theory (Barney et al., 1991; Faulkner & de Rond, 2000) - Strategic management theory (Flagestad & Hope, 2001) - Microeconomic theory (Weaver, 2009)
Theories related to tourism networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social network theory (Jesus & Franco, 2016) - Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Khazaei, 2015) - Actor-network theory (Jóhannesson, 2005) - Network analysis (Partelow & Nelson, 2020)
Relationships-based theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social exchange theory (Fyall & Garrod, 2005) - Game theory (Sheng, 2011)
Politics-based theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political theory (Richter, 1983) - Power-relations theory (Cheong & Miller, 2000) - Institutional theory (Falaster et al., 2017) - Corporate social performance theory (Pugalis, 2011)
Process-based theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life cycle theory (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) - Development process theory (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994)
Identity-based theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social identity theory (Burns & Novelli, 2006)
Other theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chaos theory (Boukas & Ziakas, 2014) - Complexity theory (Stevenson et al., 2009)

First of all, there are resource-based theories – resource-dependency theory, strategic management theory and microeconomic theory – which are related to management literature. The resource-dependency theory explores why different actors rely upon each other; according to this theory, stakeholders choose whether to compete or collaborate with others through power-conflict assessment (Fyall et al., 2012). The strategic management theory explains how stakeholders reduce external threats and use external opportunities through collaborating with others (Fyall et al., 2000). The strategic management theory can be used to explore collaboration formation, governance structure, dynamic evolution and performance (Gulati, 1998). The microeconomic theory explains collaboration as a tool through which stakeholders increase their productivity and efficiency (Fyall et al., 2012; Ross, 1973).

The second stream of theories explains collaborative relationships in the network context. Nguyen et al. (2019) argue that stakeholder theory (ST), actor-network theory (ANT) and social network analysis (SNA) are commonly used for investigating tourism networks.

According to ST, the success of a certain tourism destination and stakeholder involvement in local networks are mutually dependent. The stakeholders are characterised by different levels of salience (Mitchell et al., 1997), and the interests of actors must be clear for the tourism destination management (Freeman, 1984; Jones & Wicks, 1999; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). However, the limitation of ST is that it does not focus on the interconnection and relationships between stakeholders and sub-networks (Beritelli, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2019).

ANT posits that networks are heterogeneous but in typical conditions formed by a principal actor who activates others (Dedeke, 2017; Ren, 2010). The focus of ANT is on the mutual influences between the actor groups and helps to identify problems and explain goal setting (Vicsek et al., 2016). However, the limitation of ANT is that the actor-network is under constant change, which can generate a risk of endless chains of associations (Nguyen et al., 2019).

There are studies (e.g., Baggio et al., 2010; Cehan et al., 2021; Dredge, 2006; Hristov et al., 2018; Restrepo et al., 2021; Tinsley & Lynch, 2001) that use SNA, ‘a strategy for investigating social structures’ (Otte & Rousseau, 2002, p. 441), to explore networks with quantitative

methodology. SNA investigates the information sharing between networking actors via direct and indirect links. While SNA explains the processes inside the network, it does not consider the factors that frame the development of networks (Albrecht, 2013).

SNT helps identify different networking actors and explains the strength of ties in a network (Granovetter, 1985). Previously, SNT has been used for investigating rural-urban tourism cooperation networks in the inland regions of Portugal (Jesus & Franco, 2016). SNT proposes individual, interpersonal and collective self-creation. The individual self-concept has its essence in salient interpersonal relationships.

Relationship-based theories include the social exchange theory and game theory. The social exchange theory is based on the principle that if the problem domain is highly complex then stakeholders are more drawn to operate in collaboration (Levine & White, 1961). This theory explains that stakeholders can adopt relational structures to facilitate collaboration, and these structures consist of interpersonal relationships (Fyall et al., 2012). Over time, collaborative stakeholders move closer to each other and form a network (Fyall & Garrod, 2005).

The game theory explains the formation of coalitions, different collective actions between stakeholders and interdependent collective payoffs (Fyall et al., 2012; Parkhe, 1993).

The third stream of theories that explains collaboration is based on political science. The political theory focuses on power in society (Keohane & Nye, 1977). In the field of collaboration, the political theory can explain authority, credibility, power and trust (Fyall et al., 2012). Through the power relations theory, power relations can be explained in the collaboration setting, which is helpful in exploring why collaborations succeed or not (Reed, 1997). The corporate social performance theory shows how business organisations respond to the interests of the stakeholders and direct these interests to raise their institutional and social legitimacy (Fyall et al., 2000; Wood, 1991). The institutional theory explores the roles that stakeholders have in organisations and how they are organised (Strauss, 1978).

The fourth stream of theories in collaboration research focuses on the collaboration process. The essence of TPLCM has been explained

thoroughly in paragraph 2.4 because it constitutes the theoretical frame in Paper III. The development process theory, for example, shows that uncertainty over time shapes collaborative relationships and affects the success of the collaboration and trust between the stakeholders, while negative personal relationships impact on the evolving collaborative structure (Fyall et al., 2012).

The fifth stream of theories focuses on identity in the collaboration setting. Paper II uses SIT, which focuses on individual, interpersonal and collective self-creation in the social environment. The self as an individual develops through their relationships with others and through their social identities. Individuals possess several 'selves' and relate with different groups. When a person belongs to a certain group, this group becomes an ingroup for that person. Other groups in this context are the outgroups. The interplay between ingroups and outgroups creates an 'us & them' effect (Islam, 2014; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In a tourism setting, SIT has been used in explaining place identity creation in the tourism context (Liu & Cheng, 2016) as well as relationships between place identity and their tourism support (Wang et al., 2014).

The sixth stream of theories is comprised of the chaos and complexity theories. The chaos theory includes a 'broad set of loosely related theoretical and meta-theoretical orientations to the behaviour of complex non-linear systems' (Seeger (2002, p. 239). In the collaboration context, the chaos theory explains how collaboration self-organises and self-renews according to the initial conditions of the collaboration, examines chance and opportunism, and how collaboration re-establishes, restructures and attains a sense of order in the collaboration process (Fyall et al., 2012). The complexity theory, however, explains how organisations adapt to their environments and how they handle uncertainty (Fyall et al., 2012; Stacey, 2007).

3. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this thesis is to identify what affects the evolution and sustainability of collaboration between diverse rural tourism stakeholders in Estonia.

In this thesis, the following research questions are answered:

1. what is the nature of the collaborative ties and relationships between diverse tourism entrepreneurs and sub-networks in a tourist region (I);
2. what fosters and hinders the development process of a regional tourism collaborative network (I);
3. what is the role of individual identities in the shared collaborative identity creation process (II);
4. how is the shared collaborative identity perceived by the stakeholders and facilitated (II);
5. how is a rural tourism collaboration adhering to the TPLCM phases (III);
6. what factors affect collaboration between rural tourism stakeholders in different collaboration stages (III)?

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 Research areas

The main research area of this thesis and Papers I-III is Pärnu county, which includes the town of Pärnu and surrounding rural area. In the context of this thesis, they are considered one tourist region (Figure 2). The Pärnu region is situated in southwest Estonia and has a population of 82,997 (2016) residents (Statistics Estonia, 2018). The tourism industry in the region traces back to the 19th century when health and beach resort development started in the town. During the first Estonian Republic (1918-1940), tourism in Pärnu town began to grow. It became popular among Estonians and visitors from abroad and earned a reputation as the summer capital of Estonia. The town was badly damaged during World War II. The new era of sanatorium network development began in the communist period after the war. During this period, some of the tourism moved to the countryside in the form of summerhouse establishments. The modern tourism era in the Pärnu region began after the restoration of Estonian independence in 1991 under the free market conditions, which created new opportunities for tourism development. Nowadays, the town is a popular destination for summer holidays or spa breaks (Kask, 2008). Tourism in the rural areas of the Pärnu region still lags behind, and 85% of all nights spent by visitors take place in Pärnu town (Statistics Estonia, 2020).

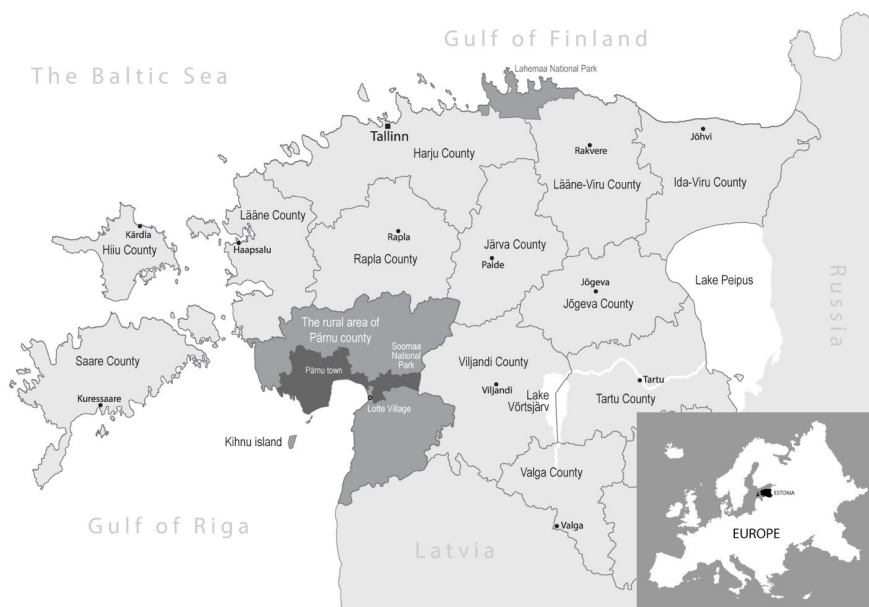


Figure 2. The research areas.

A new regional development strategy for Pärnu county aims to foster tourism collaboration networking, where the rural areas of the region are more to the fore. The focus is also set on the joint development of rural and urban tourism with the aim of providing services to domestic and international family and conference tourists (Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2030+, 2014). In the region, the primary foreign tourism markets are Finland, Latvia and Sweden (Alajõe et al., 2010).

Pärnumaa Tourism Foundation (Visit Pärnu) is the main regional DMO responsible for tourism development. Estonian tourism policy implementation and supporting and marketing Estonian tourism in the domestic and global market is the task of Enterprise Estonia. The Estonian Rural Tourism Organisation (the non-profit umbrella organisation for rural tourism stakeholders) supports tourism-related activities in the rural area, which include joint marketing, the development of different tourist routes (related to food, sauna and hiking) and international collaboration with other organisations in different countries. Local LEADER action groups (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly and Green Riverland Partnership) support rural development in the countryside, taking into account agricultural, tourism, other entrepreneurship, social and community development needs. LEADER groups consist of individuals, rural enterprises, agricultural

cooperatives, local governments, village associations and other non-profit community initiatives. Paper III focuses on one particular rural tourism collaboration – the Romantic Coastline. The owner of the RC is the Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly (PBPA), which consists of 9 rural municipalities and was established in 2003 with the aim of fostering rural entrepreneurship through the utilisation of EU funding. The PBPA strategy states that tourism support is needed to foster other entrepreneurial activities and sectors, stimulate entrepreneurship beyond the sectors and offer benefits to the members of local communities. The main focus of the PBPA is on local food and the promotion of the rural coastal area. The RC has 205 organisations as potential members (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, 2015), but its membership policy is quite complex. At the start of the RC, collaboration managers held face-to-face conversations and recruitment events with interested actors. With those activities, they mapped all potential members, and they were then considered members of the RC network. The managers did not create a formal membership agreement. If an interested party was officially registered in the RC region and offered services related with the aims of the RC, then the organisation was considered part of the RC collaboration network. RC membership is free of charge, but members pay for using the marketing materials and the RC trademark. In 2011, there were 59 organisations that used the RC brand (Kaldoja, 2011). A voluntary goodwill agreement has also been established between RC and its members, which is moving towards a more formal relationship.

Urban tourism companies in the Pärnu region receive support in the form of, *inter alia*, marketing and interest representation at both national and international level from the Estonian Spa Association and Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association, which are non-profit organisations that represent their members' interests in Estonia and abroad.

Lahemaa National Park (LNP) was used as a second research area for more comprehensive results. LNP is a rural destination (Figure 2) that is known for its natural landscapes, hiking trails, beaches, local maritime scenery, history, manor culture, and it is one of the most important forest protection areas in Europe. LNP is the biggest national park in Estonia, is located in northern Estonia and has a population of 3,600 (2016). The park was founded in the communist era (1971) to protect local natural resources and cultural heritage. LNP is a popular nature-based tourism and summer holiday destination with rich outdoor infrastructure

(Ausmeel et al., 2016). According to the State Forest Management Centre, the park receives 180,000 visitors annually (Karoles-Viia, 2018). The tourism enterprises in LNP are usually micro-businesses that offer accommodation, food and catering, guiding, or other adventure and nature-based tourism services. Tourism development related tasks in LNP are divided among local municipalities, the State Environmental Board, the State Forest Management Centre and the local Lahemaa Tourism Association (Visit Lahemaa) initiative, which is a non-profit that represents the interests of local tourism entrepreneurs. The Rural Tourism Organisation and Enterprise Estonia are also involved in tourism development in the park.

4.2 Sampling and data collection

Qualitative research design (Flick, 2014) was used in this thesis. This allows for exploring the phenomena under study (tourism collaboration networking) in the context where it exists. Qualitative research design is based on the principle that actors (e.g., tourism entrepreneurs) and their experiences are 'unique, context-dependent and largely non-generalisable' (Yilmaz, 2013: 317). As part of qualitative research design, the purposive selective sampling strategy was used. The principles of this sampling technique (Flick, 2014) are common in qualitative research. This enabled the selection of study participants who have extensive knowledge of the phenomena under study (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This sampling technique made it possible to include participants from each municipality, rural and urban tourism areas, private, public and non-profit sectors, project leaders/managers, active/passive and new/old members, different fields of operations, and several municipalities and tourism organisations across the region, along with stakeholders with longer and shorter collaboration history. The study participants were identified mostly through official regional tourism information channels. The list included information on their locations, tourism activities and years active. Some of the study participants were chosen through personal contacts and the snowball technique with them was used to find more interviewees. This approach helped to minimise the negative sampling effect, which at the start of the research might make it difficult to determine the right size of the sample (Palinkas et al., 2015). The right sample size emerged during the research process. The participant selection ended when the author decided that the information the

interviewees provided saturated itself, meaning that no new information emerged from the data collection.

Most of the interviewees in both study regions were women over 40 years of age. Among the interviewees in the Pärnu region, there were six males in both the town and rural areas and in LNP there were two male entrepreneurs. Almost all the interviewees were residents of the local communities, and almost all of them work in different occupational fields besides tourism, such as the local schools, local municipality, LEADER local action group, village association community centre or some other local initiative. The research participants were selected to represent the whole area of the study regions; were required to have an occupation or entrepreneurial interest in the tourism sector and included a combination of stakeholders operating in the region for longer and shorter periods. During the different interview sessions more participants from the rural Pärnu area were chosen because this area is larger than the urban area. The main focus of this study is on collaboration between tourism entrepreneurs but because of the complexity of collaborative networking, representatives from public and non-profit sectors were also interviewed. In Estonian rural tourism, many non-profits and public sector organisations offer tourism services, and the representatives of those sectors are also involved with their private tourism activities. An overview of the study participants is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of the study participants.

Field of operation	Interviews in the rural Pärnu area	Interviews in the urban Pärnu area	Focus Group interview in Lahemaa National Park
Active holiday activities	3	5	2
Accommodation providers	6	1	3
Food and catering	3	1	1
Mixed and others	10	2	2
Non-profit and public sector	5	1	1

Years active			
1–5	2	3	3
5–15	15	4	4
More than 15	10	3	2

Individual semi-structured interviews (two interview rounds, first with rural and then with urban tourism stakeholders) in the Pärnu area and a focus group interview in Lahemaa National Park were the main data collection methods used in this thesis. Interviews were carried out between April 2017 and May 2018. In the chronology of this thesis, the data set for Paper III was the first that was collected. It included 27 semi-structured interviews and was conducted with rural tourism stakeholders from the Pärnu region who belonged to the private (15), public (5) and non-profit (7) sectors (Appendix A). This was followed by Paper II in which some parts of the same data set were used but, additionally, 10 more semi-structured interviews were conducted with the urban stakeholders (Appendix B) from Pärnu town. Also, a semi-structured focus group interview (Appendix C) with the stakeholders (9 members) from Lahemaa National Park was conducted. In Paper I, the previous data set was used for primary data collection, and this included the semi-structured interviews from the rural and urban stakeholders from Pärnu county.

In the Pärnu region, individual interviews were chosen for data collection because the area is large and consists of many different communities, networks and destinations. Compared to Pärnu, LNP is more compact and smaller; for this reason, the focus group interview was used here.

In all three data collection sessions, a semi structured interview questionnaire was used with open-ended questions. The questionnaires used in this research are added to the end of this thesis (Appendices A, B, C). There are several themes in the questionnaires, each of which included several questions. However, it is important to note that depending on the answers of the interviewees and overall flow of the interview, several questions were improvised spontaneously during the interviewing process and the list of the questions is therefore not absolute. The sequence of the questions and what questions were specifically asked from each interviewee also varied between the interviewees, depending on their answers and which sector or organisation they

represented (public, private or non-profit). Occasionally, the interviewees spoke freely about the issues related with tourism collaboration at the beginning, during the break or at the end of the interview. This was also considered a valuable source of information and analysed as part of the interview. This approach offered more insights and knowledge into regional tourism networks, collaboration, stakeholder relationships and other related issues. For example, the questionnaire that was used in Paper III focused mostly on the Romantic Coastline (RC) collaboration. However, during the interviews, some interviewees offered connections and insights that were not only related with the RC collaboration but with other regional collaborations and state, regional and local tourism collaboration management.

The interview questionnaires used to collect the data set for Papers I-III sought responses on different themes, which are explained in Table 4.

In addition, document analysis was used in Paper III. In the document analysing process, different strategy, planning and marketing documents about the Romantic Coastline collaboration network were examined to find traces and insights into the different collaboration stages in the tourism collaboration life cycle.

Table 4. Data sets used in the papers.

Themes in the questionnaire	Questionnaire 1 (rural stakeholders, Appendix A)	Questionnaire 2 (urban stakeholders, Appendix B)	Questionnaire 3 (focus group, Appendix C)
Personal background of the stakeholders and connections with the Romantic Coastline	Papers I, II, III		
The leadership of the Romantic Coastline	Papers I, III		
The RC influence, impact and benefits on the region	Papers I, II, III		
Collaboration between the RC members	Papers I, II, III		
Financing of the RC	Paper III		
Relationships between the members of the RC	Papers I, II, III		
The future of the Romantic Coastline	Paper III		
Background information of the stakeholders in the Pärnu region		Papers I, II	
Visitors in the Pärnu Region		Papers I, II	
Networking and collaboration in the Pärnu region		Papers I, II	
Regional destinations (Pärnu region)		Papers I, II	
Identity (Pärnu region)		Paper II	
Background information of the stakeholders in Lahemaa National Park			Paper II
Visitors in the Lahemaa National Park			Paper II
Networking and collaboration in Lahemaa National Park			Paper II
Identity (Lahemaa National Park)			Paper II

4.3 Methodological approach and data analysing process

The multi-grounded theory (MGT) and qualitative methods are used as the methodological framework of this thesis. The MGT has been successfully used for studying complex phenomena (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010) such as higher education (Freeman, 2018), business process theory (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006) and social media marketing typology (Coursaris et al., 2013).

The MGT is a fairly novel approach and is a further development of the GT (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). This approach was chosen because collaboration networks are not well researched and documented in Estonia. However, they are well researched in a global context. Often, GT is considered suitable in the context whereby an inductive approach can open new theoretical perspectives. GT enables the inductive generation of categories from empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) through different coding procedures such as open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin 1998). GT was developed and first introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967). GT is considered a valuable tool, especially in qualitative studies, and helps inductively generate theoretical statements from the empirical data. Today, there are several versions of the GT and even the developers of this approach have different perceptions on how GT should be used. The debate about the use of GT has focused on how strict a researcher should be when conducting inductive analysis (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The GT has been in the foreground of several studies (e.g., Gasson, 2004; Kelle, 2005; Urquhart, 2001) and has limitations in that it can generate a loss of knowledge and isolation and is quite complex to use. Knowledge generation should synthesise existing theory and empirical data for inspiration and challenge theoretical abstractions.

MGT enables the combining of the inductive and deductive approaches and draws on existing theoretical statements while inductively analysing collected data during the research process. MGT creates an interplay between empirical and theoretical statements and different discoveries along the research process with repeated theoretical matching and empirical validation (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006). This approach allows for generating new theoretical statements and supplementing existing theories. In the multi-grounding process, emerging theories are related to empirical data and pre-existing theories. The use of MGT enables

the researcher to constantly refine the research aim, questions and focus during the research process (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

In Papers I-III, a four-step MGT data analysis process was used (Figure 3).

Theory development

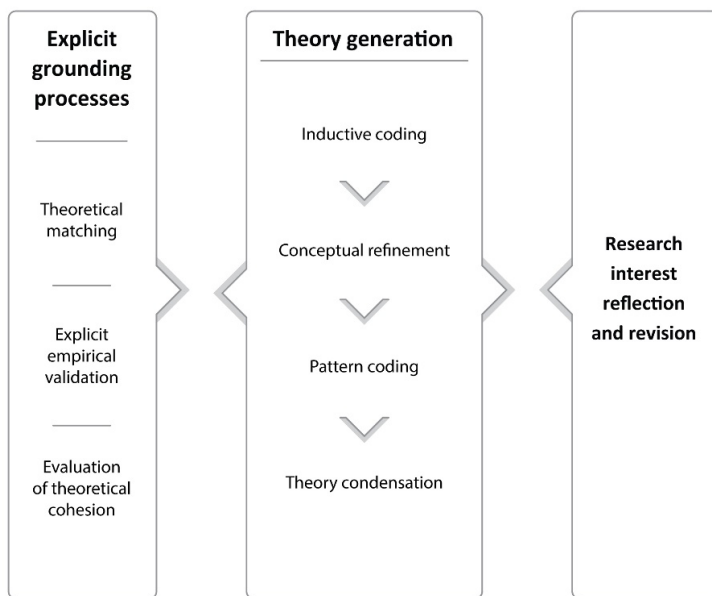


Figure 3. An overview of the MGT analysing process (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

The research process in the MGT has four steps as illustrated in Figure 3. During the first step (inductive coding), all the collected and transcribed data were inductively coded as close to the text as possible without any pre-conceptions to prevent the loss of emerging ideas and concepts. This was followed by the primary categorisation of codes without any predetermined categories (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). During the first step, different meanings, themes, relationships and connections (e.g., related to the collaboration, networking, collaborative identity, collaborative platform, stakeholder relationships) started to emerge, which showed that the research was ready to proceed to a second step.

Different themes emerged in the inductive coding step. These included:

- a) ties, relationships, connections and meanings between rural and urban stakeholders(I);
- b) meanings, themes, relationships and connections (e.g., related to identity, collaboration, post-communist environments, trust and levels of formality) (II);
- c) partnership life cycle development, elements that influence collaboration development, initiation dynamics, evolution and sustainability in the transcribed text were coded without predetermined theoretical categorisations (III).

The second step in the MGT process – conceptual refinement – involves the creation of a comprehensive definition of categories (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). In this step, all the empirical statements and concepts that emerged during the previous inductive coding step were critically examined and assessed before the next categorisation. The use of MGT assumes that the key concepts and theoretical insights that emerge in different steps of the MGT application require constant assessment, and this step allows to empirically validate the data (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). During this step, data from the interviews and focus group were compared with research notes taken during the different stages of the research.

In the third, pattern coding, step, the assessed empirical statements were compared to existing theoretical concepts (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010) and a new set of interim categories was devised. During this phase, different concepts emerged:

- a) the entity of multiple ties (e.g., communication, relationships and agreements) that connect rural and urban enterprises and other stakeholders (I);
- b) individual, interpersonal and group self-construction, and place, environmental, occupational and cultural identity concepts, the interaction of multiple identities in the tourism collaboration setting in individual and group levels, and personal and interpersonal relationships with the ingroups and outgroups (II);

c) TPLCM development, tourism collaboration development and process in different life cycle phases, fostering and hindering elements of tourism collaboration, the role of governance and leadership (III).

Theory condensation is the last step in the MGT analysing process. During this step, a grounding of evolving theoretical statements was done. Before that, explicit grounding processes, which included theoretical matching, explicit empirical validation and the evaluation of theoretical cohesion, were implemented (Figure 3). The final step involved testing the empirical, theoretical and internal validity of new theoretical patterns and statements as well as the comparison of new and existing theoretical statements. The most important theoretical insights, concepts and principles were grounded in this step (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010), such as different ties, relationships and regional destinations that connect rural and urban stakeholders, enterprises and networks (I); the role of place, environmental, occupational and cultural identity in shared collaborative identity and the creation of a shared collaborative identity in the collaboration platform (II); and the circularity of the partnership life cycle, and elements that influence the evolution and sustainability of multisectoral collaboration between the private, public and non-profit sectors in different partnership life cycle stages in the post-communist rural environment (III).

5. RESULTS

This chapter presents the main findings from Papers I-III.

5.1 The nature of collaborative ties and relationships in the regional collaborative networking

Results show that fostering collaboration and networking at regional level requires an understanding of what distinguishes different types of networks in the tourism area, how they function, how dense they are and how they are connected via different ties and relationships. The findings indicate that in the Pärnu region different rural and urban tourism networks form complex ties and connections in their entrepreneurial environments, but they do not create a large regional tourism network. As highlighted by one urban entrepreneur:

‘Explaining collaboration networking in the Pärnu region is extremely difficult.’

Networking in the study region takes place between entrepreneurs in the urban, rural and regional networking space where they can be distinguished by density and the ties that connect them (Figure 4).

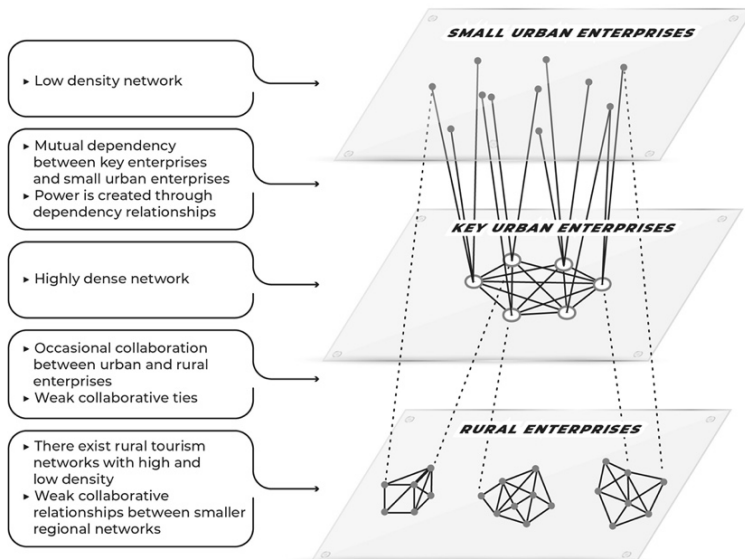


Figure 4. Different ties that influence tourism networks in a tourist region.

In the Pärnu region, collaborative ties between rural and urban tourism entrepreneurs are not well established. The interviewees highlighted a stronger and dense urban tourism network with key entrepreneurs in positions of power and influencing regional tourism much more than rural networks (Figure 4). The results show that the ties between networks are influenced by visitor movements in the region. The respondents point out that a high number of tourists arrive in the Pärnu region through channels controlled by key urban enterprises that are closely linked to the Pärnumaa Tourism Foundation, the public sector tourism organisation. This situation in the town dates to the early years following the restoration of independence, when sanatoriums that were previously owned by communist state organisations were privatised by entrepreneurs. This change generated high interest in the Finnish market, which is still the main visitor segment in the Pärnu area. The interviewees highlighted that this helped to give urban enterprises a good starting point, which has led them to holding a dominant position in the area (I, III). This was highlighted as follows by one interviewee from the rural area:

'Tourism in the Pärnu region is focused on the town, and the development of rural tourism has not changed that.'

Despite being in a position of power, key enterprises are on hand to collaborate with others when necessary (I). A representative of a spa hotel explains:

'In our company newsletter, we have an article about rural tourism opportunities in the countryside of Pärnu. When our clients ask us what to do in the countryside, we also recommend some enterprises. This shows that we are open to collaborating with others.'

However, one rural entrepreneur shares another view:

'These large urban enterprises are only interested in what happens in the town. They are so big; why do they need us?'

However, some interviewees highlight that despite the key urban enterprises being in a dominant position, they do not have that much power over rural enterprises because rural networks and enterprises do

their own marketing and find their own clients. This was highlighted by a rural entrepreneur:

'Despite a lot of tourism in the Pärnu area taking place in the town and key enterprises having much to say how to develop tourism, rural destinations do their own thing. For example, Kihnu island, Soomaa National Park or Lottemaa have their own clients and collaboration networks.'

Besides large spas and hotels, there are many smaller enterprises (e.g., equipment rent, food and guiding) in Pärnu town. They are highly competitive and do not usually collaborate. Therefore, the density in the network is low (Figure 4). Typically, these enterprises focus their services on hotel and spa visitors. The representatives of these small enterprises point out that they are not engaging in any excessive marketing and rely on the clients of key enterprises. The key enterprises also need the services of those small companies because it is not in their business model to offer bike rent by themselves. This kind of client sharing is highly informal and both parties mention that it is also mutually beneficial. However, it is argued that this situation creates a dependency between key and small urban enterprises. Because the region is known as a beach holiday destination, it is difficult for smaller enterprises to step out of this relationship and find clients and offer services during the offseason (I). Highlighted by a representative of small enterprises:

'We depend on a great deal on summer visitors, and we have tried to do our own marketing during the offseason. Because the Pärnu area has such a strong summer holiday destination image, it is really difficult to do something outside of the summer season.'

There are some joint events in the town (e.g., the Pärnu Restaurant and Cafe Week) where key and small urban enterprises share more collaborative relationships, but the interviewees highlighted that this is not enough for trust-based collaborative networking in the urban tourism space (I).

There are a variety of small informal rural tourism networks in the Pärnu region (I) (Figure 4). Some of them are linked with local LEADER action groups and are more formal (e.g., Romantic Coastline) (III). In the small informal tourism networks, the members of the network make all the decisions regarding network development, and the networks that

are centred around a LEADER group have their own management body. LEADER groups provide support to these networks (e.g., EU funding, joint marketing, socialisation events, workshops and trainings) (I, III). Several respondents noted that relationships between the entrepreneurs in one network can be highly dense but not as dense between different networks and destinations. For example, networks in Kihnu island and Soomaa National Park are considered highly dense, but Romantic Coastline where most of the network members are located far from each other represents a low-density network in the region (III) (Figure 4).

Collaborative networking in the rural tourism context means that mostly accommodation, catering and active holiday providers combine their services on a smaller scale to satisfy visitor needs and retain clients longer in the destination (I, II, III). This is explained by a rural tourism entrepreneur:

'Sharing visitors and combining our services gives visitors a better experience and they are willing to spend more time in the rural area. Doing this leaves more money in our community.'

There is some occasional collaboration between rural and urban entrepreneurs, but the majority of these initiatives are not sustainable and do not offer long-term solutions. This kind of occasional collaboration mainly happens between rural enterprises and key urban enterprises (Figure 4).

5.2 Individual identity relations with shared collaborative identity on the collaborative platform

The results of Paper II indicate that during the collaboration process partners start to create a shared collaborative identity, where their individual identities meet the identities of others through which a shared collaborative identity can form. This process is explained in Figure 5.

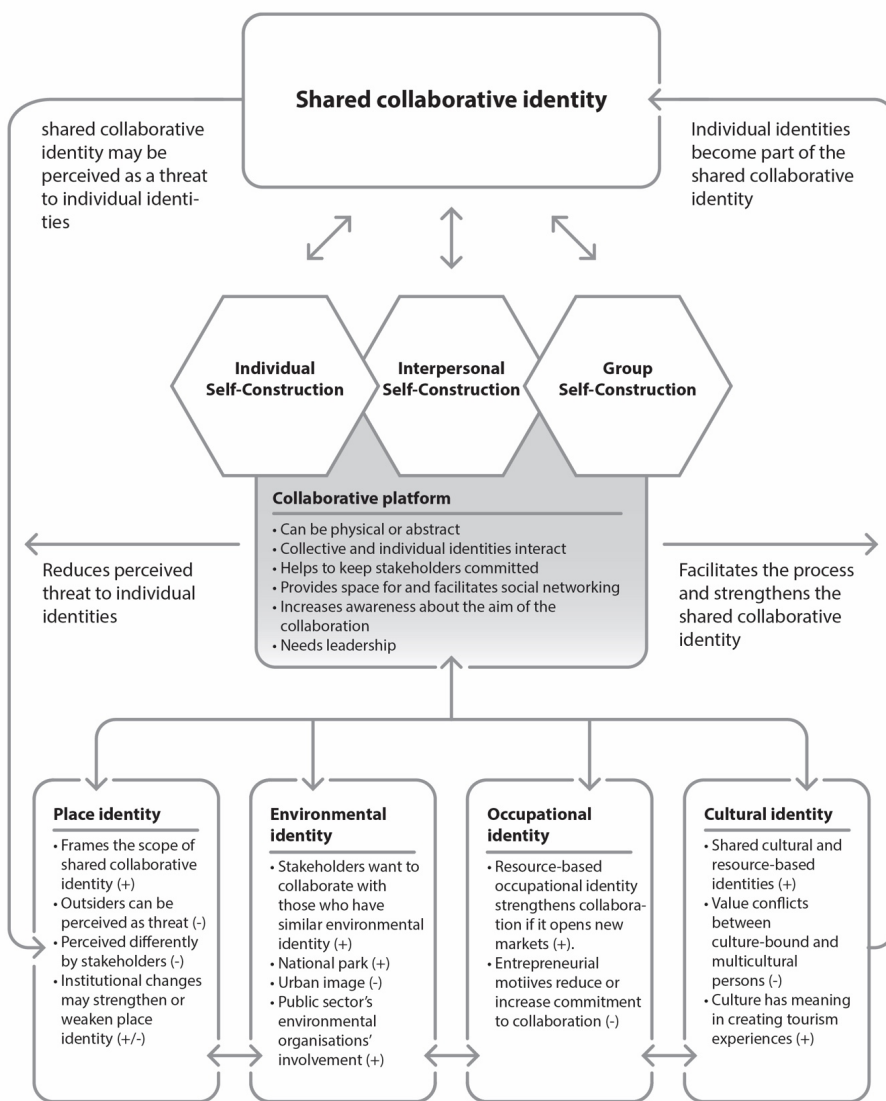


Figure 5. Shared collaborative identity creation process.

Findings from both study areas (LNP and Pärnu region) indicate that the place, environmental, occupational, and cultural identities of the stakeholders are involved in forming a shared collaborative identity (Figure 5). This shared collaborative identity is explained by a member of the RC collaboration:

When tourists start to move around in our region, they see the sign of the RC collaboration in several places. When a tourist visits one place belonging to the RC

network and has a positive experience then that tourist wants to go to other RC places as well. Through this diversity, a tourism experience is created in collaboration.'

Shared place identity between the collaboration partners creates borders for shared collaborative identity creation and facilitates this process. Within the environment of highly salient place identity, entrepreneurs outside of their home community can be perceived as a threat, and collaborative relationships are usually not established with them (Figure 5). Results from both study areas show that those entrepreneurs who locate in the border areas of different municipalities and far from regional centres perceive place identity differently. In LNP, some stakeholders who locate outside of the park still identify themselves with the national park (II). In the Pärnu region, there is much more confusion in the border areas as to which collaboration network to belong because there are different overlapping networks (I, II, III). An interviewee who belongs to the RC network explains:

'The municipality to which I belong is located on the boundary of two counties. Some entrepreneurs relate to the Green Riverland Partnership, but I would rather stick here towards the coast where the Romantic Coastline is.'

Several interviewees and focus group participants comment that the communist legacy and rapid institutional changes in recent decades have shaped the place and cultural identities (II). Changes like accession to the EU raised their sense of belonging because it offered more entrepreneurial freedom (opening of the borders) and investment opportunities. However, recent municipal reform negatively influenced the feeling of belonging (I, II, III). Participants pointed out that the communist past and recent turbulent times are part of their identity now, and these have also shaped their attitudes towards collaboration (I, II, III) (Figure 5).

The perception of environmental identity during the collaborative processes differs among the stakeholders in the study areas. However, environmental identity has a role in shared collaborative identity creation (Figure 5). Interviewees from LNP highlight that they relate their collaborative actions with the identities of the national park and their home community. Usually, collaborative partnerships are created between the entrepreneurs who are residents of the park. In this context, the interplay is created between place and environmental identity. However,

the results from the Pärnu region show that the environmental identity of the entrepreneurs is not always related to their spatial location but instead to the field of services that they provide. Some nature-based tourism entrepreneurs who locate in the borders of Pärnu town identify themselves more with natural highlights of the region and not with usual holidaymaking in the town, which also characterises a large part of the image of the region (I, II, III).

Environmental identity is focused more on shared collaborative identity creation when a public sector organisation (Environmental Board) is involved as a partner. However, it raises conflicting opinions among the interviewees, as some see such organisations as a distraction, while others note that working with them is the only way to develop tourism in environmentally sensitive areas (II) (Figure 5).

It is quite common in both study regions for tourism entrepreneurs to have several jobs besides tourism entrepreneurship (II). They also work in local governments, schools, village associations or other local organisations and they may have several occupational identities. Many interviewees highlighted that they are also involved with resource-based occupational activities, such as farming, fishing or forestry (II). Some interviewees commented that tourism allows them to create a marketplace in collaboration with others to sell resource-based products (II, III) (Figure 5). An entrepreneur from the Pärnu region illustrated this:

'We as an accommodation provider try to buy everything from local farmers. We also smoke fish because my husband is a fisherman. Tourism allows us to sell our products here because the market is far from us.'

Results show that collaborative relationships in tourism help entrepreneurs focus on one activity that becomes salient among other occupational identities, e.g., handicraft. However, these entrepreneurs collaborate to sustain their business activities for a certain period. This kind of infrequent collaboration, which is based on business motives, does not always initiate proper collaborative relationships. This shows high complexity in how occupational identities influence a shared collaborative identity creation (II) (Figure 5).

In both study areas, resource-based occupational identity has many connections with cultural and place identity through, for example traditional handicraft, woodwork and food, and the local culture has become part of the local tourism experience. Cultural identity can hinder the shared collaborative identity creation process when culture-bound and multicultural persons have different opinions on tourism development. However, results indicate that the representatives of both groups highlight that if tourism negatively influences local cultural values, then the development must be stopped (II) (Figure 5).

Collective aims are more achievable and a shared collaborative identity more salient among the stakeholders when friends or acquaintances are part of the collaboration and people share common values and meanings, which relate to place, occupational, environmental, and cultural identities. Through shared collaborative identity, stakeholders can relate with other individuals, community members or other actor groups. Through these interconnections, individuals find meaning in their actions, life and place in the world and form their own identities. This helps to build and give meaning to communities and groups and to share a collaborative identity (II, III). This is explained by an entrepreneur:

'It seems that is easier for me to collaborate with the people that I know.'

Respondents noted how it is common that collaboration widens during shared collaborative identity creation, but this can hinder the sustainability of the collaboration. When entrepreneurs begin not to identify with the wider collaboration or they feel a threat to their individual identities by others, they start to look for other solutions (II, III) (Figure 5).

A collaborative platform is a key element in shared collaborative identity creation (Figure 5). The platform initiates the interaction of individual and collective identities, frames the collaboration, facilitates the shared collaborative identity creation, offers collective and individual benefits, creates a suitable environment for collaboration, promotes the collaboration and helps to retain the involved actors within the collaboration (II). An example from the Pärnu region is the RC collaboration and in Lahemaa National Park itself. Results show that a collaborative platform can exist in different formations such as stakeholder relationships and tie, as well as in study trips and events, or it can take material form, such as a market or hiking trail. A collaborative

platform also provides a place for socialisation among the stakeholders (II, III). A collaborative platform facilitates individual and collective self-construction and is a ‘place’ where individual identities transform into a collaborative identity. The initiation and maintaining the operation of the platform requires leadership and management (II).

5.3 Rural tourism collaboration life cycle development processes

The results show that tourism collaborations evolve through different processes and follow a life cycle. However, one collaboration can simultaneously evolve in formal and informal timelines where one timeline complements the other (Figure 6). The case under study (the RC collaboration) has a formal timeline that follows the EU funding periods and an informal timeline that represents informal collaborations that have evolved simultaneously alongside the formal timeline (III).

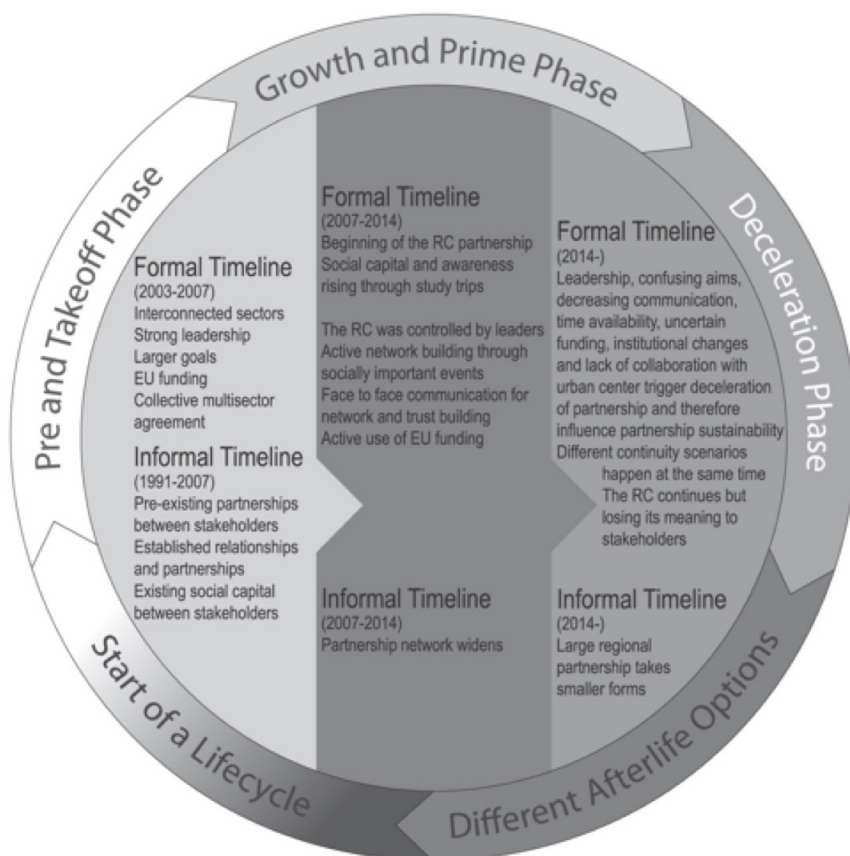


Figure 6. Circular development of the tourism collaboration life cycle.

The collaboration under study (RC) has clear pre- and take-off phases that date back to the time when it was clear Estonia would become an EU member. The local activity group with competent leaders consisting of members from different communities in the Pärnu region aimed to use the opportunity. With EU funding, they built a large rural tourism collaboration network in the Pärnu region. There was an already functioning informal rural tourism network and social capital among the stakeholders, which formed a strong basis for formal collaboration (Figure 6). The collaboration began under LEADER action group and involved the public, private and non-profit sectors. The respondents noted that because the majority of the network participants had additional occupations besides tourism entrepreneurship, they were familiar with the working principles of different sectors, which helped to define common goals (III).

Mutual trust, professional leadership, high interest among local stakeholders and raising social capital initiated a fast start-up phase where collaboration was developed through common workshops, study trips and a festival network. Two leaders constantly pushed the collaboration forward and with the EU funding the existing network moved into the growth phase and the majority of pre-existing informal collaborations were identifiable as formal RC partnerships (Figure 6). The interviewees highlighted that shared collaborative identity building was one of the key elements in this phase (III). This was explained by one of the collaboration members:

'The leaders were acting like Jehonah's witnesses. They had such a high belief in this collaboration, which created a huge spark that ignited others.'

During the prime phase, the collaboration was compared with a social movement where entrepreneurs had many opportunities to fulfil their entrepreneurial and social aims.

Despite the success, some powerful stakeholders remained sceptical about tourism development, and leaders left the project due to power struggles. This change and the fact that the collaboration had grown too big and confusing led it into a deceleration phase in which stagnation started. The RC collaboration still exists but it does not have the strength that was there during the prime phase. Important outcomes of the RC exist in the forms of an informal collaboration network, viable

local festivals and other events. However, they are without a strong RC identity. The interviewees point out that despite the decline of the RC they now have better knowledge, tools and a high level of social capital for informal collaboration development. Some opined that another formal collaboration might be necessary in order to take the next leap in regional collaboration (III).

5.4 Evolution of tourism collaboration in the Pärnu region

To explain rural tourism collaboration in a specific environment, a wider regional and narrower network-specific approach is necessary (I, III). Results show that, at regional level, tourism can be divided into urban and rural spaces. The main differences between these spaces are in: (1) entrepreneurial environment; (2) existing networks and networking practices; (3) public sector involvement in tourism development and (4) visitors (Figure 7) (I).

Wider regional tourism collaboration networking is often related to local strategic aims to increase the competitiveness of a tourist region and enhance the capacity of local tourism entrepreneurs. When dense and low-density networks join for mutually beneficial rural-urban tourism collaborative networking, it can give new innovative ideas to tourism development at regional level (I). However, the interviewees highlighted that unity at regional level is important but can be difficult to achieve because rural and urban enterprises are too different (Figure 7). This is explained by a representative of a large spa:

'Our clients ask what else there is in the region and they will get that info at our reception. I am certain that if our visitors visit some rural entrepreneur they would have a richer experience and would probably stay longer in the area. However, I do not know how it could become a proper collaboration with rural entrepreneurs because we have 200 rooms to fill, and rural entrepreneurs operate at such a small scale. Our business model is different. Joint networking requires a lot of effort, maintaining communication and all that. I cannot hire a separate employee for that. If we only had a competent tourism organisation to help us do that, it would work, but it is difficult under the current conditions.'

One rural entrepreneur added:

‘Rural tourism enterprises offer services that are not found in the town. These include horse riding, herb gardens and nature guiding. Town visitors spend some days at the beach and visit some restaurants, but after a while it can get little bit boring in the town. They could then visit rural entrepreneurs as well. In theory, this could create a win-win situation for all parties. However, the difficulty here is that we operate on such a small scale and we look to offer personalised experiences to small groups. When loads of people start to visit us, we just lose what we are.’

A public sector representative points out that:

‘Tourism in Pärnu town has been heavily orientated towards the Finnish market and the promotion of this direction has become saturated. The region could really benefit from new target groups, such as higher-end visitors from other Scandinavian countries. To raise its attractiveness, the region would need more synergy in combining rural and urban services and the focus should be on increasing quality in both segments. However, for decades rural and urban entrepreneurs have been in their own environments and operating on different scales and focused on different visitors. To date, no one has been able to get them together to work on common goals.’

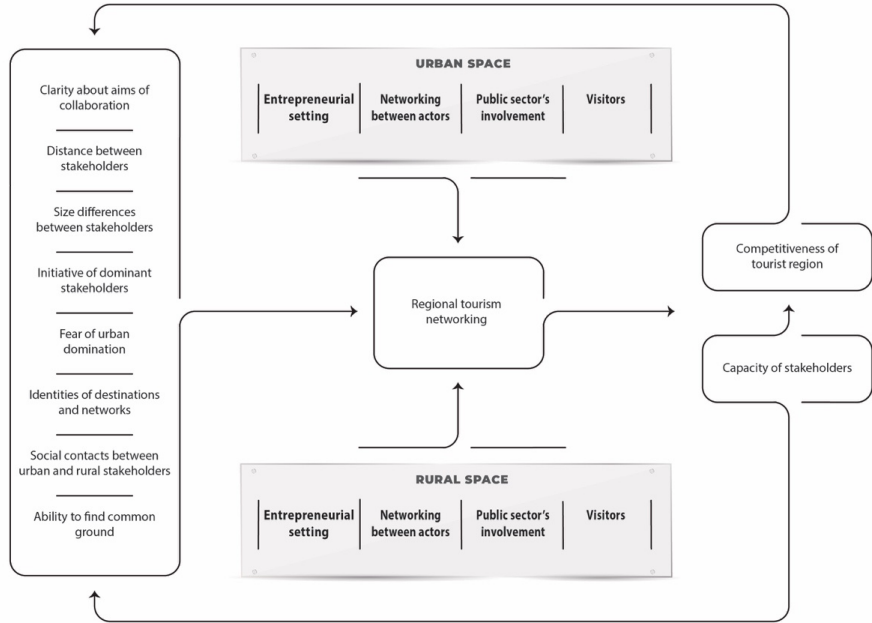


Figure 7. Tourism networking in the Pärnu region. The centre of the figure illustrates collaborative action. Elements that affect collaborative actions are shown on the left side of the figure, and collaboration aims, and outcomes are shown on the right side.

Respondents from all types of regional tourism networks point out that there is not an effective joint platform where rural and urban entrepreneurs can socialise and find common ground and aims. They also highlight that the development of strategic aims for regional tourism are mainly placed on the shoulders of the public sector, which has its vision of how to foster tourism in the region – one that does not always coincide with the vision of entrepreneurs. When entrepreneurs take the initiative then, the interests of dominant stakeholders from the urban space are usually at the foreground. The interviewees argued that the reason why different stakeholders cannot find common goals is mainly related to tourism organisational diversity and constant organisational changes. Public sector involvement in connecting rural and urban tourism entrepreneurs is considered highly important by the stakeholders, but their involvement in tourism management in the Pärnu region is quite complex due to the existence of different DMOs in the region. The respondents pointed out that the municipality of Pärnu town and Pärnumaa Tourism Foundation as the main local DMO are the key public sector organisations actively implementing local tourism strategy (III). However, in rural areas, the tourism management tasks belong to several municipalities and LEADER local action groups (III); therefore, tourism development related activities differ to a great extent (I, III). The interviewees pointed out that there are no clear rules on how private sector enterprises are invited to collaborate with public sector organisations on matters of regional tourism development. Usually, key urban enterprises are summoned by Pärnumaa Tourism Foundation to discuss and decide on the development of tourism in Pärnu town and region. This kind of multisectoral networking does not have a clear formal structure, and it takes place when there is a need to decide how to proceed with local regional tourism development (III). This aspect is illustrated by the representative of a key urban enterprise:

'We are invited by the local DMO to discuss regional tourism development when there is a need to reach a consensus on some big decisions.'

Some rural stakeholders are cautious in joint networking between rural and urban entrepreneurs in the Pärnu region and share their concerns that if they were to create something collectively it would fall into the hands of urban entrepreneurs and give them more power (I). This is explained by a rural entrepreneur:

'Collaboration with urban enterprises can offer us more visitors but over the years we have operated independently. I am afraid that if we were to collaborate with those big enterprises in the town they would stand primarily for their own interests and dictate to us what to do. This would result in them being the greater beneficiaries of the collaboration.'

In this environment, identity frames the scope of the collaboration between the actors, and their identity differences can make mutual collaboration a challenging task (II). This is explained by an entrepreneur:

'If you look at the region from a distance, then you will probably first see Pärnu town with the beach and hotels. Then there is Kihnu island, Soomaa National Park and other destinations. They all have their own entity, and they do their own thing and develop tourism in their own way framed with their environment. So, if you look closer then you will see that there are many different elements in the Pärnu region.'

However, almost all interviewees highlight that in the future there must be more collaboration between rural and urban enterprises, because the main visitor segments in the urban area are becoming more interested in the services provided by rural entrepreneurs.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Post-communist collaboration environment

Results show that the turbulent changes in recent decades have influenced and still influence the development of collaborative relationships between rural stakeholders in Estonia. The transition period and communist history have influenced the tourism stakeholders and regions under study, and they have also shaped the surrounding institutional environment that supports or hinders local tourism (I, II, III). It is known from Poland that several factors characterise post-communist environments, such as financing problems, underdeveloped society and a lack of collaboration experience, which have negatively influenced the collaboration development (Czernek, 2013). This study adds (I, II, III) that major institutional changes in society and identity are also key elements that influence tourism collaboration (Figure 8).

The communist period reduced the sense of belonging among rural community members (Annist, 2011). It emerged from both study regions that tourism collaboration development in rural areas has increased that sense of belonging and of home. However, the opposite was also highlighted, as some study participants compared recent municipal reform with the communist era collective farming, and they highlighted it as a negative change that reduced the sense of home. It is found that larger municipalities are more efficient than smaller ones (Luik-Lindsaar et al., 2018), but the amalgamation of municipalities can change the identity of a region or community and negatively impact local community life and residents in the process. A reduced sense of home manifests itself in the form of fear that local decision-making shifts to the regional centres, which, in turn, impacts on locality and takes away something that is created together at community level (I, II, III). This clearly shows the importance of the institutional environment that surrounds tourism collaboration at local level. This indicates that knowledgeable professional tourism governance can bring the benefits associated with collaboration into a collaboration that offers benefits to all participants. At the same time, such governance should avoid, as much as possible, the negative effects that a change in the institutional environment may bring (Figure 8).

It is known from previous studies (Czernek, 2013; Czernek-Marszałek, 2020) that the younger generation is more eager to establish collaborative relationships, and more passive entrepreneurs hinder the development of the long-term relationships that are required to bring economic benefits to communities. Stakeholders in the rural areas of Estonia are more open to establishing collaborative relationships with their friends or acquaintances on a smaller scale than entering into large collaborative arrangements with strangers. Collaboration with bigger groups of actors can give rise to the fear that something will be taken away from them during the collaborative activities (I, II, III).

6.2 Collaborative ties between regional tourism entrepreneurs and networks

In order to understand collaboration in rural tourism, it is necessary to know how rural tourism collaboration networks are connected with other networks at the regional level, particularly when the regional strategic aim is to bring rural and urban stakeholders closer to each other (I). Figure 8 illustrates rural tourism collaboration in a regional and wider institutional context.

Joint rural and urban tourism collaboration has not been reported on to a great extent in scientific literature. Jesus and Franco (2016) highlight that different tourism actors have their separate resources and combining those through collaboration increases regional competitiveness in the tourism market. Murdoch (1998) points out that different networks are tied in time and space where similar elements bring different regional networks closer together. It was found in Portugal that urban tourism enterprises plan their collaborations more than rural enterprises (Jesus & Franco, 2016). In post-communist Estonia, entrepreneurial activity is higher in the urban areas and urban hinterland than in the rural hinterland (Põder et al., 2017). In the Pärnu region, key and small urban enterprises are dependent on each other because they are offering their services to the same clients (brought to the region by key enterprises); however, usually they do not share collaborative relationships that are based on trust and their level of collaboration planning is not high (I). In rural areas, however, tourism enterprises focus on finding their own clients and do their own marketing. In Estonia, informal collaboration between rural tourism enterprises and combining resources have become

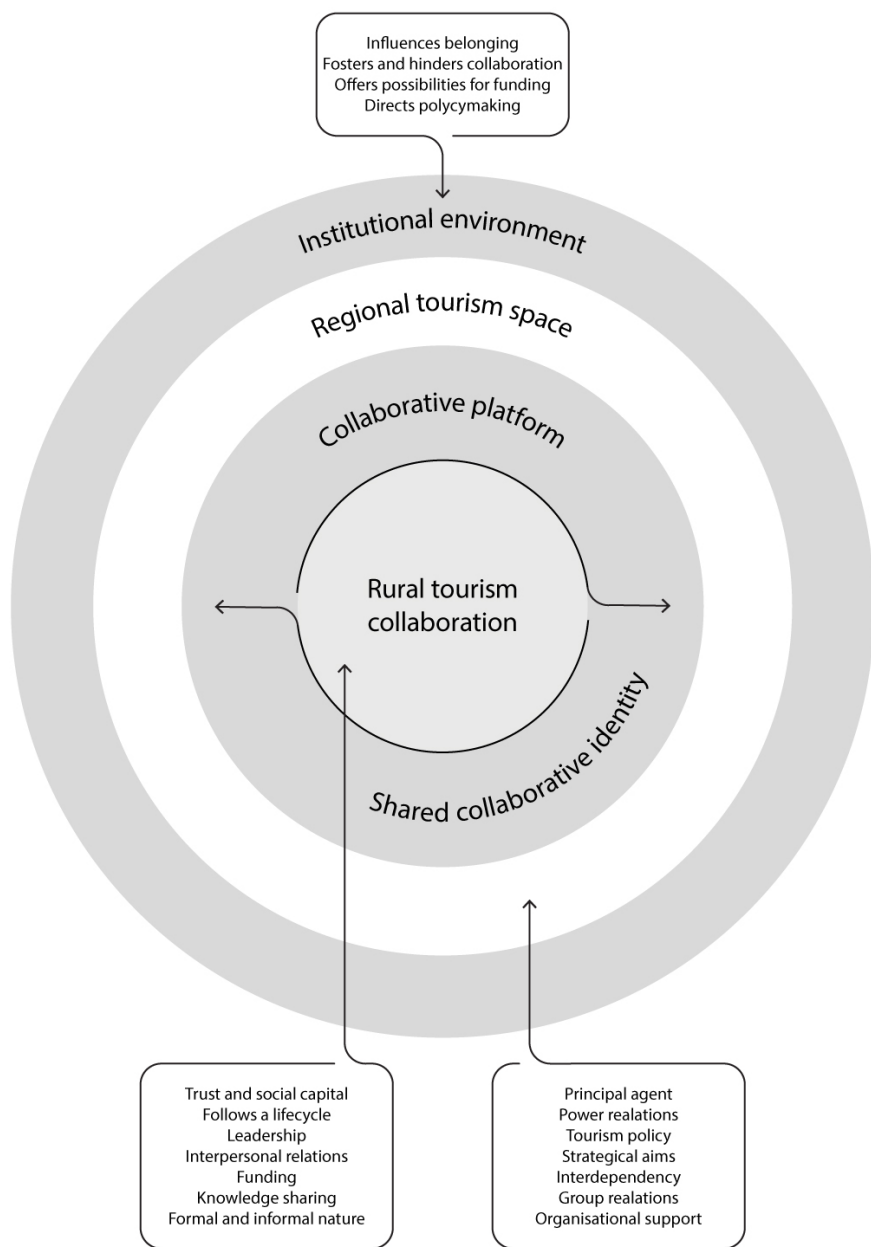


Figure 8. Rural tourism collaboration scheme in the post-communist environment. The circles from the outside to the inside illustrate the larger social environment that influences rural tourism collaboration at local level. As the rural tourism collaboration progresses through the life cycle, its sustainability and scope are affected by the elements (shown in square boxes) that characterise processes inside of the collaboration and its relation to the social sphere that exists outside of the collaboration.

everyday practices. This helps reduce costs, offer a better service to the clients and keep visitors longer within a community (I, III).

Tourism collaboration at regional level creates an interplay between independence and interdependency (Figure 8), where power position in the stakeholder relationships is one of the key elements (I, II, III). This is especially important when collaborative relationships are informal because the partner with more power can easily step away from the collaboration (Ford et al., 2012). However, power relations at regional level can be complex. Freeman (1978) points out that betweenness centrality indicates the shortest path between the actor and others, and it shows the actor's ability to control the communication channels in the network. In the Pärnu region, key urban enterprises possess information as a resource, and because of that they enjoy high betweenness centrality among other networks and occupy a central position close to the main market. However, small urban enterprises are more influenced by that situation than rural enterprises because they do not share much knowledge and information (I) and are dependent on key enterprises.

According to SNT, strong ties between the stakeholders are based on close long-lasting collaborative relationships and weak ties on short and highly formal relationships (Jesus & Franco, 2016). ANT principles show that the situation between key and small enterprises in the Pärnu region is more business transaction based than collaborative, even when there are some collaborative elements (e.g., mutual gain) involved. All this indicates that by being in a position of power, key urban enterprises shape the local tourism more than small and rural enterprises. This created a strong spa and beach vacation holiday destination image for the whole region. As people take beach holidays in the high season (summer months), it is difficult to develop tourism services in the region that are not dependent on the summer season.

From the rural perspective, some rural tourism destinations (Kihnu island, Lottemaa and Soomaa National Park) stand out on their own, away from Pärnu town (I). These rural destinations have highly dense collaboration networks where socialisation, trust, knowledge and information sharing between members are common. Kihnu island is known for its cultural traditions and Soomaa as a nature-based tourism destination. Other rural tourism networks are more different because entrepreneurs often have locational and social distance between them, and they are located far

from urban and rural social circles that are mandatory for information sharing. This indicates that these networks are not dense. High density can also be found in small rural tourism collaboration networks, which are often based around a single community and only include a small number of stakeholders (I).

Closeness centrality indicates how close one actor is to other actors in the network, which influences information sharing and communication (Freeman, 1978). This study adds to the SNT that in low-density rural collaboration networks, closeness centrality is low. However, these networks are still based on trust, but because of low density it is difficult to foster growth and connect them with other regional rural and urban networks. Dependency between the entrepreneurs in rural networks compared to urban networks is similarly high, but there the relationships are based on trust, knowledge sharing and power relations, which make them more balanced. In low-density rural networks, the network members usually find their clients without the help of the network, but finding clients is easier in dense networks (I).

Dense rural networks do not depend on urban visitors because they are conducting their own marketing and find their own clients by themselves; often they use joint marketing. The regional core destination can be an urban area, but the results of this study show that there is a greater degree of complexity in this matter (I, III). In a large tourist region, rural destinations and networks can also be local or even regional cores (Kauppila et al., 2009) as in the case of the Pärnu region where dense rural networks are local cores. However, different networks have their visitors who might not be overly interested in visiting other destinations in the region, which, in turn, does not create interactions between the rural and urban networks (I).

This study shows that from a regional tourism networking perspective establishing a rural and urban collaboration network is a challenging task. In the Pärnu region, rural-urban collaboration is occasional and collaborative relationships are established at the minimum level. From a regional perspective, it is difficult to find a joint platform for high and low-density networks. Local tourism strategy shows that rural and urban networks should complement each other, but it is challenging to initiate collaboration between those networks. There are several reasons for that. First of all, it is difficult to form and facilitate common interests

between rural and urban networks at the larger regional level because these networks are too different, and it is hard to find a central position for regional rural-urban collaboration. According to ANT, power is not a resource in itself but is manifested through collaboration (Nguyen et al., 2019). The findings of this study contribute to ANT in that despite the regional power position, key urban enterprises do not have much power over rural networks, and they have different clients. The second aspect shows that in the process of fostering regional rural-urban collaboration, rural entrepreneurs fear that formal collaborative networking with urban enterprises will increase urban tourism's influence in the region (I).

The findings show that when highly dense networks start to widen, they sooner or later stagnate because after initial growth their density can be lost, as happened with the RC collaboration network (III). Brandão et al. (2019) point out that diversity in networks leads to greater innovation, but this study adds that this aim is not easily achievable. However, there exists a way in which rural and urban networking can be fostered. There are a handful of entrepreneurs in the Pärnu region that offer their services to both urban and rural clients and combine the benefits offered by those different networks. From a regional perspective, these entrepreneurs have gained a central position, which makes them more successful (Freeman, 1978), and they can gather and use information from both markets (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). This does not create fast solutions for more rural-urban connections and networking; however, this trend can be beneficial for future developments because urban visitors are becoming more interested in rural tourism experiences. If this development progresses, then rural tourism entrepreneurs can benefit from more stable tourist visits, and both rural and urban entrepreneurs can keep visitors longer in the region, which will increase their income and enrich the visitor experience. It seems that rural-urban tourism joint networking can be achieved through a joint effort in which a bottom-up approach and top-down tourism development are combined (I).

In conclusion, it can be highlighted that rural and urban destinations in the study environment are quite isolated from each other, and over the years regional tourism management has focused heavily on tourism development in the urban area. However, tourism has changed significantly in recent years, and old development models are no longer suitable in modern travel where maintaining a competitive edge in a tourist region means having better integration between different

elements (Pollock, 2015). Continuing as before exacerbates regional stagnation and further widens the gap between different tourism actors.

6.3 The importance of the governing body in joint rural-urban networking

Stemming from above, the fostering of rural-urban joint networking requires an effort from both sides, and a joint platform is required in order to achieve this. The results indicate that rural and urban networks in the Pärnu region are distant from each other, and a suitable platform where they can meet has not formed. A governing body can offer such a platform to the stakeholders, but the difficulty here is that rural and urban networks have different governing bodies who are not able to bring rural and urban networks closer together.

An innovative institutional arrangement is required in order to achieve a functioning rural-urban tourism network with a connecting governing body. Institutional support is considered extremely important in tourism collaboration (Bichler & Lösch, 2019) but it should not be the responsibility of the public sector alone. Literature shows that a high level of public sector involvement in network development can raise several challenges. Regional rural and urban networking development can be hindered because a local DMO is not focusing on entrepreneurs with different salient levels (Mitchell et al., 1997), and strong public sector control over a collaboration can negatively impact collaboration sustainability (Augustyn & Knowles, 2000; Caffyn, 2000).

This study shows that wider tourism networking at regional level requires joint efforts from the private, public and non-profit sectors. In the wider regional perspective this development can be challenging with diverse rural-urban actors, but some at least partially successful examples can be found from rural areas. EU funded collaboration networking projects have been under heavy criticism recently (Shepherd & Ioannides, 2020). On the other hand, a LEADER local action group can act as a governing body and unite different actors and widen the social circle from one community to another (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). In the Pärnu region, this has been achieved to a certain extent (I). The LEADER local action group is a platform where private, public and non-profit sectors meet. An example can be given in the context of the RC collaboration where strong three-sector integration enabled the

collaboration process across those sectors. This eases network creation and trust building because members know how different sectors work and what their responsibilities are (III). However, a LEADER-based governing body is not suitable for urban networks because LEADER groups focus on rural development. The RC shows that despite this the focus was to build a tourist route along the coastline, with Pärnu town being omitted from the route because the RC is owned by the LEADER group (III).

It has been shown that an organisation that offers strategic bridging between different stakeholders as an independent third party can help to connect diverse tourism stakeholders through a bridging online platform. However, even when the third party is involved in connecting various stakeholders trust is important at all collaboration stages (Park & Kohler, 2019). This kind of outside help can help to bring stakeholders together, but it is not known how trust will be created in such conditions and diverse interests channelled in such a way that the collaboration is accepted by the stakeholders. A governing body that can foster better regional unity between rural and urban tourism networks should understand the essence of informal collaboration and needs from small entrepreneurs, relationships that connect key and small urban enterprises with each other. Furthermore, it must be able to influence policymaking at a wider institutional level (Figure 8). Achieving this can be a challenging task because many strong bottom-up initiatives in the study region look for a platform through which they can have a better connection with public sector tourism management. However, due to organisational diversity and weak tourism management at state level, it may take a long time for these attempts to succeed.

6.4 The role of a collaborative platform in tourism collaboration development

This study contributes to the science that a collaborative platform initiates interaction of self through relations with other actors, which in turn spawns shared collaborative identity creation where identity is perceived at the personal, interpersonal and group levels. On the collaborative platform, collective and individual identities interact, and the high level of perception of shared collaborative identity is a key for successful collaboration (II).

The collaborative platform can exist in many different forms, including virtually and/or physically (community centre) and/or have an organisational presence. All these elements can exist separately, partially or simultaneously. However, the key to how the platform is manifested will be through stakeholder interaction and relationships. Therefore, the collaborative platform should offer socialising, communication, knowledge sharing and mutually beneficial activities to the stakeholders through which they will become more firmly attached to the collaboration (II). This helps in defining common interests and in collaborative decision making (Bichler & Lösch, 2019). Brewer and Gardner (1996) highlight that ‘defining the individual’s self-concept derives from comparisons between characteristics shared by in-group members in comparison to relevant outgroups’ (p. 85).

In the study regions, collaborations are usually established informally between few actors with constantly changing interdependent relationships. The existence of a collaborative platform is related to the interdependency level among the participants, and this evolves through the interplay between formal and informal collaborative activities. However, informal collaborations between several actors have a clear limitation on how big they can grow, and their collaborative relations do not always create a collaborative platform because they do not create any new value. In this context, collaborative activities can still be implemented; however, without a collaborative platform, the sustainability of the collaboration will not be achieved because actors can find it easier to achieve their aims without collaboration and perhaps begin to use business transactions or other means instead of collaboration (I, II, III).

This study adds to the academic literature that collaboration platform in the tourism networking context is a constantly evolving and changing phenomena. When the regional aim is to unify existing collaboration networks between diverse stakeholders, the social selves of the individual tourism stakeholders must start to relate more with impersonal groups on the wider regional level. This is not easily achievable because of identity differences, the absence of a governing body recognised by both rural and urban stakeholders, diverse aims, networks with different density, power relations, different central position of the networks and diverse entrepreneurial environments (II, III) (Figure 8).

A collaborative platform at community level should also have connections with the regional and wider institutional level. This kind of integration can make the platform work as a powerful information and knowledge tool, which can help to solve the challenges that rural tourism entrepreneurs have. As it is framed by the identity of the participants and formed based on their social relations, the widening of the platform is not that easy. This can be achieved with the help of digitalisation and at the same time not disturbing the more traditional elements that form a collaborative platform.

6.5 Shared collaborative identity creation and the role of individual identities in this process

Shared collaborative identity creation is highly important in collaboration development and can only be achieved when it relates to the individual identities of the collaboration members (II) (Figure 8). A shared collaborative identity consists of the place, environmental, occupational and cultural identities of the stakeholders. Commencing shared collaborative activities initiates the process of collective identity creation and the most salient components of the self are shared with others (Brewer, 1991). During this process, individual self-construction and collaborative actions reflect on each other at the personal, interpersonal and group levels (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). From the study regions, an example can be given of how shared collaborative identity is created (I, II, III). Shared collaborative identity creation was an important element in RC collaboration in the rural Pärnu area. However, they succeeded with this task in the start, growth and early prime phases of the collaboration. Later, shared collaborative identity creation slowed down because of the change of leadership and the widening of the collaboration outside of the original frame. Then stakeholders could no longer identify themselves with the collaboration and it started to decelerate (III). In a collaboration project like the RC, company and collaboration-level identities exist in symbiosis; however, some stakeholders commit more to the shared collaborative activities and others to their personal business activities (Öberg, 2016). This thesis adds that excessive widening of the collaboration leads to deceleration and initiates the process in which collaboration takes smaller forms that stakeholders can better identify with (III). Commitment to collaboration is related to cognitive, communicative, organisational, functional, social,

cultural and geographical distances (Czernek-Marszalek, 2019), and as shown by this thesis, differences in identity too (II).

Barriers to collaboration between different groups can also exist because common group identity connects individuals who like each other. In such situations, ingroup members are preferred over outgroup members who may not share similar interests, attitudes and values to that ingroup. However, there exists a different scenario indicating that belonging to a certain group can be so essential to a certain individual that membership of that group makes the members of the group socially attractive to each other despite their dissimilarities. Here, people may not like each other but they collaborate nonetheless because membership is so important to them. This helps different groups to work together (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The essential element here is that those group members consider membership in a certain group to be central to their self-concept and have strong emotional ties with that group; this helps confer self-esteem and sustain social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As the RC case shows, the collaboration started between a small group of people and then grew to the point where the inclusion of other groups started and known relationships between friends and acquaintances also began to include relationships with strangers (III). Collaboration in the RC context started to shift from the interpersonal level to the group level (II, III). This kind of shifting process is challenging because different social groups compete over status, prestige and distinctiveness (Hogg et al., 2004), and as the RC case showed this development led to deceleration. During the broadening of the collaboration network, uncertainty can rise because at the starting phase the relationships with strangers are not based on trust. And if the uncertainty is not reduced, individuals can perceive a threat to their individual identities, which hinders the growth of the network. Then the widening of the collaboration becomes vulnerable, the perception of shared identity creation reduces and collaboration divides into smaller formations (II). Previously, Caffyn (2000) pointed out that identity is one of the most important elements in influencing collaboration sustainability. The RC case showed that overly extensive collaboration does not sustain collective identity building, and collaborative achievements shift into smaller and less complex formations. In this case, region-wide rural tourism collaboration divided into local events and smaller interpersonal collaborations (III). This shows that when social capital is created through collaborative actions it brings together similar people who bond

with each other and different people who create bridges with each other (Putnam, 2000; Norris, 2002). Collaboration between friends fosters the in-group identity generation through which hostility towards others can emerge. Bridging creates more positive relations where a variety of actors initiates collective actions (Coffé & Geys, 2007; Putnam, 2000) for solving societal problems (Larsen et al., 2004).

It seems that in the post-communist rural tourism environment creating such an attractive group identity that allows the members to collaborate without taking into account their differences is not achievable in the current conditions (a lack of trust and collaboration history in society). The findings of this study indicate that even when people do not like each other personally they are at least connected through the place, environment, occupation and culture. This may also be so because small scale informal collaboration does not create this kind of attractiveness. A strong collaboration platform can offer an engagement opportunity for creating such an attractiveness, but this requires further investigation.

Through socialisation, knowledge sharing, communication, entrepreneurial and other activities, a collaborative platform can help to find common meanings of what place, occupational, environmental and cultural identity mean to the stakeholders in the collaboration setting and shape the essence of a shared collaborative identity (II).

A study from Ireland shows that a tourism offering in a certain region initiates the commodification of a place through heritage or the natural environment and creates new social relations between individuals and groups in that location. However, the existing social relations are affected by how much commodification takes place. In these conditions, some long-standing relationships between friends who are connected with local tourism can be so strong that others can be easily left out from local economic and social circles (Kneafsey, 1998). This study adds that place identity frames the scope of a shared collaborative identity. However, stakeholders can sense place identity differently and the level of perception determines whether outsiders will be accepted or rejected by the collaboration network. The findings of this study indicate that it is difficult to offer a joint platform for the collaboration when there are major differences in how place identity is perceived by the stakeholders (II).

It is known that a strong environmental identity creates a positive attitude towards tourism (Teeroovengadam, 2018). A common understanding of local natural values unites stakeholders, especially when this identity is strongly manifested, such as in the framework of a national park. In the national park environment, public sector involvement as a form of environmental organisation strengthens the perception of environmental identity. However, sometimes the participation of a public sector organisation can slow collaboration progress due to the bureaucracy that influences the perception of shared collaborative identity (II).

Resource-based occupational identity is strongly perceived among the tourism stakeholders because it enables them to sell their resource-based products. However, in rural areas, people often have several occupations, and this lowers their commitment to one occupation. Furthermore, as tourism is seasonal, their perception of occupational identity that is based on tourism entrepreneurship is in many cases quite low, and this hinders shared collaborative identity creation (II).

Nunkoo & Gursoy (2012) who studied resource-based occupational identity relations with tourism in Mauritius point out that community support towards tourism depends on what kind of development is taking place. Their findings indicate that people with a high level of resource-based identity will likely view tourism development negatively. In Estonia, many stakeholders combine their tourism services with the local culture, and resource-based occupational identity and cultural identity become integrated, which offers economical and social benefits to the wider circle of residents within a community. However, multicultural and culture-bound persons can perceive cultural identity differently (Bożetka, 2013), which can raise tensions in the collaboration network and influence the shared collaborative identity creation process. However, this thesis shows that people with different views can still collaborate; however, when tourism development exceeds their tolerance limits, they step away from the collaborative relationships (II).

This shows that there are more than business-related elements required for fostering rural tourism collaboration. This finding highlights that if a tourism strategy aims to develop collaboration between diverse stakeholders there should be greater focus on the themes that relate to local place, environment, culture and the tourism profession.

6.6 The life cycle of a rural tourism collaboration

The paragraphs above show that extensive collaborative networking at a regional level is a challenging task. Paper III takes a closer look at the development of one rural tourism collaboration (the RC) network in the life cycle context and shows that networking on a smaller scale is no less challenging.

Previous research (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) shows that tourism collaboration based on process and collaboration timeline helps to understand this process. TPLCM has previously been implemented in the context of one collaboration timeline. However, the RC case shows that collaboration can simultaneously follow two – formal and informal – timelines, which is an important contribution to the TPLCM (III) (Figure 8). During the deceleration, different afterlife options for the collaboration began to emerge.

The RC collaboration officially started in 2007 and it grew through different phases that ultimately led the RC to stagnation. These phases are listed below.

There was not a proper system implemented to measure collaborative success. Czernek (2013) highlights that without measurable aims, stakeholder scepticism can increase in regard to collaboration. This was also the case with the RC where the real benefits of the collaborative efforts remained unclear, and the stakeholders became dissatisfied and began to look for other collaborative arrangements (III).

The collaboration leaders worked without a proper supportive team. During the start, growth and prime phases, they carried the idea of the collaboration by themselves and a vacuum was left in the leadership following their departure. The leaders were forced to leave because despite their high competence they did not have real power within the LEADER group (owner of the RC) management, and the lack of measurable targets led to a situation where several high-power stakeholders remained sceptical about the benefits of the RC (III).

The collaboration was highly dependent on external EU funding, which created a great deal of uncertainty among the participating members

as to how the collaboration would continue when the funding period would end (III).

The rural tourism entrepreneurs in the study region have multiple occupations, and they are involved in entrepreneurial activities that take a large amount of their time. For this reason, it is difficult for them to contribute to voluntary activities related to collaboration network development (III).

When the leaders left the collaboration, it precipitated a sudden drop in communication. Subsequently, many collaboration participants did not know what the status of the collaboration management was, which created distance between the stakeholders, and they felt no longer involved in the collaboration (III).

This led the RC collaboration to enter stagnation and it started the deceleration phase; however, at the beginning, there were elements that had ensured a fast start, successful growth and prime phases. Before the start, the participants were already collaborating informally, which ensured a smooth accession process. As Caffyn (2000) and Peroff et al. (2017) have highlighted, ideas cannot be implemented without proper funding. This was guaranteed by the EU funding because RC is owned by Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, which is a LEADER local action group. The collaboration leaders wrote project applications and with the co-financing of the local municipalities, the money was used to build tourism infrastructure, joint marketing, a festival network and study trips within the RC region, which helped to foster the collaboration.

During the growth phase, the leaders constantly pushed the stakeholders to action. The local festival network started at that time and it is considered one of the main outcomes of the RC collaboration. The festivals helped to build stronger relationships between different community members, fostered cross-community collaboration and included locals in entrepreneurial activities. The RC case shows that social elements in collaboration are equally as important as entrepreneurial elements. Festivals worked as a marketplace where stakeholders sold their homemade products and linked them with tourism services. Several studies (Augustyn & Knowles, 2000; Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) show that proper funding arrangements are keeping collaborative networking going. The RC created a process where the EU funding was

used to start a festival network and after a while the majority of the festivals achieved self-funding. However, during that process, they also shifted away from the RC and created their own identity (III).

The reasons why the RC collaboration started to decline are highlighted above. In the deceleration phase, different afterlife scenarios emerged in the RC because the collaboration simultaneously followed formal and informal timelines. The more formal side of the RC collaboration slowed down, but it gave strength to other collaborations, such as the festival network. The RC still exists but without its former strength and restoring it would be a challenging task. This kind of development shows that formal and informal collaborations can complement each other where formal collaboration helped the informal collaboration to reach the next level. This is an important addition to TPLCM in that different collaboration afterlife options can develop at the same time (III).

The change in rural tourism collaboration is inevitable. However, without the hindering elements described above, the change in the collaboration can be more natural and beneficial to the stakeholders. Sooner or later there will be a need to change the entity of the collaboration as a result of which the collaboration will increase or decrease and/or merge into some other form. Collaboration sustainability means that there is no need to keep one collaboration going as long as possible but rather to understand at what point it makes sense to change the nature of the collaboration (Figure 8).

6.7 The interplay between informal and formal tourism collaboration

The TPLCM suggests that collaborations evolve by following a cyclical pattern. However, an important discovery emerged from the RC case in that collaboration development can also have a circular pattern, especially when the collaboration follows formal and informal timelines (III).

The RC collaboration tied small informal collaborations together for a certain amount of time and formed a large formal network. When the large formal collaboration declined, those small informal collaborations progressed with more strength, social capital, knowledge and resources than before the start of the formal collaboration (III).

Large formal collaborations can create benefits for the members of the collaboration. When fulfilling the aims of the formal collaboration declines, a new formal collaboration can emerge which, in turn, starts to create new benefits for the stakeholders (III). However, the surrounding institutional environment can support or hinder the development of formal collaborations. For example, EU accession created favourable conditions for starting a formal collaboration (I, III). The municipal reform was considered a negative influence on collaboration development by the study participants because it lowered the sense of belonging (II, III) (Figure 8).

It seems that personal relationships, social capital and trust – the key elements of informal collaboration – are more stable in the rural regions compared with the major institutional changes that surround large formal collaborative environments. Resources such as community members, social capital, local natural and cultural environment and identity are the key elements for informal collaboration and form the collaboration core. Large formal collaborations surround, develop and evolve around that informal core. The internal elements stated above influence the stability and success of the collaboration environment. In these conditions, individuals who share the same values and identify themselves in the same way can build a suitable environment for formal collaboration (III) (Figure 8).

However, even with the existence of a suitable environment, formal collaboration is affected by the political and institutional changes around the collaboration environment. With proper governance, the internal and external elements can be used to foster informal collaboration and give more power to the internal resources that exist within the core. When the collaborative aims of formal collaboration are fulfilled and new institutional changes take place in the surrounding environment, the formal collaboration starts to decline because it does not add any new value to the resources within the core. As the conditions change, a new formal collaboration can emerge, which closes the collaborative circle, and the circle starts another loop (III) (Figure 8).

These findings indicate that rural tourism collaboration never stops. It can speed up or slow down, shift forms and condition, depending on how it is governed. The resources for informal collaboration are limited and so is its growth and scope. Institutional support can be brought closer

to these informal grassroots collaboration developments. However, this scenario can only be fulfilled when there is clarity at state level as to which organisation is responsible for the development of rural tourism.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis shows that collaboration networking takes place at both wider and narrower collaboration levels in tourist regions. Collaboration aims can differ between regional tourism networks, and strong connections between the members of one community do not necessarily produce strong ties with other regional communities. Regional stakeholders, networks and destinations are hindered by physical, social, communicational and identity distance, which sets barriers that can lead to concerns that something created collectively may disproportionately benefit others (I).

For the joint rural and urban collaboration network, a governing body is required that can unite stakeholders with different levels of salience. The possible outcome of this will be a more integrated regional collaboration network in which the potential benefits of the strengths of weak and strong ties are utilised, and rural and urban stakeholders receive more benefits than they would achieve in isolation (I).

Shared collaborative identity creation helps to foster collaborative networking in smaller networks but it is also needed at wider regional levels. The creation of a shared identity is manifested on a collaboration platform where individual and collective identities interact. A shared collaborative identity is influenced by the place, occupational, environmental and cultural identities of the collaborative network members (II).

During shared collaborative identity creation, smaller examples of collaboration in which stakeholders share interpersonal relationships based on trust and similar identities start to develop into wider collaboration between different groups. When this happens, stakeholders may perceive threats to their individual identities, which, in turn, impact the shared collaborative identity. A collaborative platform helps to collectively share a collaborative identity, retain stakeholders within the collaboration, influence collaboration performance, offer socialising to the stakeholders, and increase or weaken the perceptions of shared collaborative identity. When collaboration is based on a shared collaborative identity on a collaborative platform, the collaboration will be more sustainable. When the identity creation has not been

established, stakeholders will start looking for alternative collaborations. Collaborative actions without a shared collaborative identity are usually more transaction-based where new values and wider benefits are not created. This shows a low level of interdependency between the stakeholders and does not sustain long-lasting collaborative relationships (II).

Network-specific collaboration is related to one particular rural tourism network (I, III). In a post-communist rural tourism environment, collaboration networks can simultaneously follow formal and informal timelines during their life cycle where they can evolve in more of a circular than a cyclical way. During the collaboration evolution, all stages and internal and external elements influence its sustainability and continuity scenarios. If collaboration follows formal and informal timelines, then the formal one can add more strength to the informal one. When the formal collaboration has fulfilled its aims and decelerates, a new formal partnership is necessary for advancement to the next level (III).

A collaboration network becomes more vulnerable when management is based on a few leaders without a supportive team, the aims confuse the members, the results are not measured, communication declines, stakeholders cannot spare the time to participate in voluntary activities, funding is uncertain, institutional changes make rural life unstable and there is a lack of collaboration networking with the regional urban centre. The positive outcomes of rural tourism collaborations do not only include financial gain; they also help to empower and unite community members, give locals a sense of place and belonging, offer social entertainment and give the residents of the rural areas a greater sense of purpose and sense of fulfilment (III).

The main contribution of Paper I is the finding that the rural and urban tourism networks at regional level can differ significantly, which makes it difficult to connect them in the current conditions to fulfil strategic aims. It was previously known that high- and low-density networks could complement each other. However, this can only be achieved with new organisational arrangements in regional tourism management. Another important contribution shows that all dense networks in the region can be regional cores with their clients, which makes it difficult to find a central point within the tourist region to combine different networks.

It was not known before how individual identities relate with the shared collaborative identity on the collaboration platform and what makes a shared collaborative identity. Paper II offers a valuable contribution to tourism literature by highlighting that identity frames the scope and borders of a tourism collaboration. Identity can connect or separate various stakeholders and help to understand how collaboration works, the sustainability of the collaboration and why stakeholders join or do not join a collaboration. It was previously known that trust and social capital are the key elements in sustaining tourism collaboration. This study adds that identity is also highly important on this matter.

It was previously known that the tourism collaboration life cycle is based on certain stages, follows a timeline, has one afterlife option and follows a cyclical development pattern. However, as Paper III shows, there are other development patterns beside the cyclical pattern, and tourism collaboration can progress on a circular life cycle in multiple timelines and can have various afterlife options that take place simultaneously.

To conclude, this study shows that the post-communist environment has influenced collaboration between tourism stakeholders. Major institutional changes have offered opportunities but have also hindered the development of tourism collaboration. Tourism collaboration in this environment is fragmented, informal and has no clear governance structure. Governance responsibilities are divided between several organisations and attempts to widen existing informal collaborations in order to give them more strength (which starts at the grassroots level) have limitations. The reasons why tourism collaboration is difficult to foster in a post-communist environment can be found at the state, regional and community levels. Tourism development at state level is divided between different organisations, as is the responsibility. However, in conditions of divided responsibility, governance tasks are weakly performed. At state level, a great deal of resources have been used to market Estonian tourism on the global tourism market but achieving unity in collaboration at state level has remained in the background. At regional level, destinations and networks within these destinations are fragmented and do not form a whole. A significant amount of responsibility for tourism development at regional level rests on the shoulders of different umbrella organisations and other local initiatives that have a narrower focus. As a result, there is a myriad of small informal tourism networks with weak links between them. It is quite common that tourism strategies at state

and regional level highlight the importance of finding more visitors and excessive marketing, but the integration of the internal elements as a whole has been relegated to the background. This study shows that there are vital elements for tourism collaboration, such as identity, which can bind the stakeholders but also push them away from each other. This suggests that the first aim of any successful tourism strategy should focus on the elements (not only business related, but also place, local environment, culture and occupations must be taken into account) that help to form a collaboration platform with initiation from a governing body that is accepted by all interested parties. When unity is found, only then can the competitive edge and quality be achieved that will increase interest among new visitor segments, both domestic and international. It has been highlighted that decentralisation can help to bring different stakeholders together. This study does not support that statement in the post-communist tourism collaboration context, and it shows that in this environment joint aims are only attainable when bottom-up initiatives and top-down tourism management exist in unison with clear tasks on the collaborative platform. Informal tourism collaborations have clear limitations and are influenced by the institutional environment that surrounds them. Previously, it has been pointed out that formality can help to sustain collaborations. This study adds that in an environment where collaboration is mostly informal, formalisation can make collaboration more attractive to stakeholders, but it is still framed by place, environment and local culture. The findings of this study indicate that collaboration between rural entrepreneurs will never disappear completely, as it shifts from one condition to another. However, its strength and sustainability can be increased with the right use of the benefits that wider regional collaboration and the surrounding institutional environment can offer. This can be achieved with the help of an acceptable governing body. When this is achieved, it can increase trust and social capital and lower the fear that the outcomes of the collaboration will fall into the wrong hands or that the benefits will be unfairly shared. It will also serve to lower any scepticism that tourism is not important.

Implications

Theoretical implications

- This study offers several new perspectives that can help to understand collaboration in the tourism context. First of all, in the large post-

communist tourist region that consists of rural and urban tourism, stakeholders' power between different networks is divided in such a way that no one has the power to meet the strategic aim to unify different regional networks.

- From the wider regional perspective, dense tourism networks are not compatible with low-density networks. This ultimately leads to the stagnation of dense tourism networks, despite the fact that low-density networks do not receive much more support from networks whose members are more resilient to market changes. However, due to a lack of support from the network, their growth is limited.
- A collaborative platform is needed in order to initiate networking in such a way that connects different regional tourism networks. This platform cannot emerge from the regional tourism cores but must instead have a central position between rural and urban tourism so that it can cover them both.
- Unfortunately, issues on identity have received very little attention in the tourism scientific literature. This study fills that gap. When a shared collaborative identity is achieved in such a way that it comprises the individual identities of the stakeholders and the process is facilitated in a collaborative platform and managed by a governing body that is acceptable to the majority of the regional stakeholders' different entrepreneurial environments, it can bring the participants closer together. However, when this is not achieved, diverse stakeholders will never collaborate in a sustainable way.
- In rural tourism, where resources are scarce and stakeholders depend on each other, collaboration is constantly evolving, but it never disappears completely. In this context, collaboration develops from one condition to another, creates an interplay between independency and interdependency and changes from formal to informal, and vice versa.

Managerial implications

- Local tourism leaders, managers and policymakers at the community, regional and state level now have a guideline that for successful collaboration there is a need to focus on shared collaborative identity

building. To achieve this, an accurate stakeholder mapping is needed which must show not only what the entrepreneurial ambitions of the stakeholders are, but also their values and their relations with place, environment and culture. For now, local tourism strategies usually focus on entrepreneurial elements, but the social side must be more in the foreground to achieve successful collaboration.

- This study shows that established organisational arrangements are not enough to fulfil regional strategic aims to bring rural and urban networks closer together; new arrangements are needed. A governing body should not only represent rural and urban areas; it should also consist of professionals from both regions. To fulfil this strategic aim, there must be a clear consensus on what the tasks of each interested party are. This consensus can be reached on a platform where top-down and bottom-up approaches exist together. Decades of dividing tourism-related tasks between different organisations (state and regional level) show that divided responsibility has not proven itself, and tourism management at state and regional level in Estonia is weak.

Practical implications

- It is quite common in Estonia that collaborations are managed by one or a few local leaders and they do not have a supportive team. Team development is important for successful collaboration. This helps to raise awareness of the collaboration among the participants and gets people more involved, which helps to develop the collaborative platform overall.
- Technology can help to offer new innovative communication and information sharing opportunities for tourism collaboration and to bring entrepreneurs together. This can be a solution for how to more effectively connect entrepreneurs who are members of low-density networks with regional social circles.
- Technology can also help to bring visitors closer to entrepreneurs. This can be helpful in finding new investment opportunities. For example, crowdfunding can be a solution for how to overcome dependency on EU funding. A collaborative platform that is partly

based on information technology can better connect visitors with rural tourism collaboration.

- Intergenerational collaborative learning is one avenue for collaboration development. There is a new generation of rural tourism entrepreneurs who do not have good connections with the older generation. However, intergenerational learning can offer mutual benefits to both actor groups and, as a result, can offer new solutions on how to overcome seasonality and other challenges.

Future research

- This thesis showed the high complexity of tourism collaboration networking. This indicates that collaboration must be taken on board by the stakeholders. The next research stream should focus on how tourism collaboration could be learned and taught and how this process is facilitated and who should be involved.
- One research stream could expand the wider regional network research and focus on the long collaborative process. While strategies may indicate that there is a need for joint rural and urban networking, it might happen that rural and urban networks are incompatible. This might be the case because different regional networks are in different life cycle phases. Future research could focus on different regional networks and analyse what influences the network connectivity in their life cycle context. Quantitative network analysis may be beneficial in measuring the strength of ties between different regional networks and through that more themes and elements may emerge to explain collaboration in rural tourism.
- Paper II of this thesis focused on shared collaborative identity creation in a post-communist tourism environment. Future research in a more stable tourism environment could add more insights into how shared collaborative identity is created.
- The research participants of this study were mostly women and further research could focus on gender-related issues in tourism collaboration. For example, what is inherent to women in the collaboration environment and what kinds of relationships are formed between women in the collaborative setting?

- As this study was implemented in the post-communist environment, a future study on the subject of tourism collaboration could focus on how the younger generation of entrepreneurs collaborates. Is the post-communist environment also influencing them or is it specific to the older generation?

Limitations

- Paper I. This paper focused on one particular post-communist tourist region and as tourism regions differ in their culture, history and geography, the results of this study may not be generalised to other environments. Despite the extensive analysis, more longitudinal research might be necessary because collaboration and networking are constantly evolving and changing. This can show different perspectives in understanding rural and urban collaborative networking and the evolution of ties and relationships between the stakeholders. Other methodological approaches in the same research setting may add new insights concerning rural-urban networking on a regional level.
- Paper II. This study focused on how occupational, place, environmental and cultural identities are a part of shared collaborative identity. However, other identities (e.g., gender, religion or race) could affect the creation of a shared collaborative identity.
- Paper III. This study is based on one rural tourism collaboration in a post-communist tourism environment. More studies in different environments could help to establish a more general theory about the evolution of the collaboration life circle and various afterlife options. Testing the TPLCM in different environments could open new perspectives that could show how collaboration is evolving in the life cycle context and what kind of other afterlife options exist.

REFERENCES

- Adie, B. A., Amore, A., & Hall, C. M. (2020). Just Because It Seems Impossible, Doesn't Mean We Shouldn't At Least Try: The Need for Longitudinal Perspectives on Tourism Partnerships and the SDGs. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1860071> Accessed 23.03.21.
- Alajõe, S., Gammer, G., Müristaja, H., & Semevsky, M. (2010). Suur-Pärnu turismisihkoha väljaarendamise kava [The Tourism Development Plan of the Big-Pärnu]. <http://pol.parnumaa.ee/content/editor/files/Suur-Pärnu%20turism.pdf> Accessed 08.01.19.
- Albrecht, J. N. (2013). Networking for sustainable tourism – Towards a research agenda. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(5), 639-657.
- Annist, A. (2011). *Seeking community in post-socialist centralised villages. A study in anthropology of development*. Tallinn University.
- Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2018). Collaborative Platforms as a Governance Strategy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 28(1), 16-32.
- Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2030+ [Development Strategy of Pärnumaa 2030+]. (2014). <https://maakonnaplaneering.ee/documents/2845826/18605510/Arengustrateegia+Pärnumaa+2030+.pdf/eacd007c-79cf-4c48-9436-6d438f5e4348> Accessed 04.01.19.
- Ashworth, G., & Page, S. (2011). Urban tourism research: Recent progress and current paradoxes. *Tourism Management*, 32(1), 1-15.
- Augustyn, M. M., & Knowles, T. (2000). Performance of tourism partnerships: A focus on York. *Tourism Management*, 21(4), 341-351.
- Ausmeel, H., Jürgens, K., Kingumets, K., Mets, I., Niinemägi, L., Paulus, A., & Vildak, M. (2016). *Lahemaa National Park. Estonia*. Environmental Board. https://www.keskkonnaamet.ee/sites/default/public/Lahemaa_EN.pdf Accessed 27.02.19.
- Baggio, R., Scott, N., & Cooper, C. (2010). Improving tourism destination governance: A complexity science approach. *Tourism Review*, 6(4), 51-60.

- Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99-119.
- Beaumont, N., & Dredge, D. (2010). Local tourism governance: A comparison of three network approaches. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 18(1), 7-28.
- Beech, N., & Huxham, C. (2003). Cycles of identity formation in interorganizational collaboration. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 33(3), 28-52.
- Beritelli, P. (2011). Cooperation among prominent actors in a tourist destination. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(2), 607-629.
- Bichler, B. F., & Lösch, M. (2019). Collaborative governance in tourism: Empirical insights into a community-oriented destination. *Sustainability*, 11(23), 6673.
- Bjørnskov, C. (2007). Determinants of generalized trust: A cross-country comparison. *Public Choice*, 130(1-2), 1-21.
- Bornhorst, T., Ritchie, J. B., & Sheehan, L. (2010). Determinants of tourism success for DMOs & destinations: An empirical examination of stakeholders' perspectives. *Tourism Management*, 31(5), 572-589.
- Boukas, N., & Ziakas, V. (2014). A Chaos Theory Perspective of Destination Crisis and Sustainable Tourism Development in Islands: The Case of Cyprus. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 11, 191-209.
- Bożetka, B. (2013). Wolin Island, tourism and conceptions of identity. *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, 2, 1-12.
- Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2000). Collaboration and partnerships in tourism planning. In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.). *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 230-246). Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Brandão, F., Breda, Z., & Costa, C. (2019). Innovation and internationalization as development strategies for coastal tourism destinations: The role of organizational networks. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 41, 219-230.
- Bredvold, R., & Skalen, P. (2016). Lifestyle entrepreneurs and their identity construction: A study of the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 56, 96-105.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(5), 475-482.

- Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this “We”? Levels of collective identity and self-representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(1), 83-93.
- Burkart, A. J., & Medlik, S. (1974). *Tourism. Past, present and future*. London, Heinemann.
- Burns, P. M., & Novelli, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Tourism and Social Identities (1st ed.)*. Routledge.
- Caffyn, A. (2000). Is there a tourism partnership life cycle? In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.). *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 200-229). Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Carroll, M. S., & Lee, R. G. (1990). Occupational community and identity among Pacific North-western loggers: Implications for adapting to economic changes. In R. G. Lee, D. R. Field, & W. R. Burch, Jr (Eds.), *Community and forestry: Continuities in the sociology of natural resources* (pp. 141-155). Westview Press.
- Cehan, A., Eva, M., & Iașu, C. (2021). A multilayer network approach to tourism collaboration. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 46, 316-326.
- Cheong, S. M., & Miller, M. (2000). Power and tourism: A Foucauldian observation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27, 371-390.
- Coffé, H., & Geys, B. (2007). Toward an empirical characterization of bridging and bonding social capital. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 36(1), 121-139.
- Corte, V. D., & Aria, M. (2014). Why strategic networks often fail: Some empirical evidence from the area of Naples. *Tourism Management*, 45, 3-15.
- Coursaris, C. K., Osch, W. V., & Balogh, B. A. (2013). A Social Media Marketing Typology: Classifying Brand Facebook Page Messages for Strategic Consumer Engagement. ECIS 2013 Completed Research, 46. https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2013_cr/46/ Accessed 11.04.20.
- Cresswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research*. 2nd. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Cronholm, S., & Goldkuhl, G. (2010). Adding theoretical grounding to grounded theory: Toward multi-grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9(2), 187-205.

- Czakon, W., & Czernek, K. (2016). The role of trust-building mechanisms in entering into network cooptation: The case of tourism networks in Poland. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 57, 64-74.
- Czernek, K. (2013). Determinants of cooperation in a tourist region. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 40, 83-104.
- Czernek, K., & Czakon, W. (2016). Trust-building processes in tourist cooptation: The case of a polish region. *Tourism Management*, 52, 380-394.
- Czernek, K., Czakon, W., & Marzsalek, P. (2017). Trust and formal contracts: Complements or substitutes? A study of tourism collaboration in Poland. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6(4), 318-326.
- Czernek-Marszalek, K. (2019). Distance dimensions and their impact on business cooperation in a tourist destination. *Research Papers of Wrocław University of Economics*, 63(7), 218-229.
- Cottrell, S., & Raadik-Cottrell, J. (2015). Editorial: The state of tourism in the Baltics Special issue. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(4), 321-326.
- Davis, A. (2016). Experiential places or places of experience? Place identity and place attachment as mechanisms for creating festival environment. *Tourism Management*, 55, 49-61.
- Dedeke, A. N. (2017). Creating sustainable tourism ventures in protected areas: An actor-network theory analysis. *Tourism Management*, 61, 161-172.
- Del Chiappa, G., & Presenza, A. (2013). The use of network analysis to assess relationships among stakeholders within a tourism destination: An empirical investigation on Costa Smeralda-Gallura, Italy. *Tourism Analysis*, 18(1), 1-13.
- Dimitrovski, D., Todorović, A., & Valjarević, A. (2012). Rural tourism and regional development: Case study of development of rural tourism in the region of Gruža, Serbia. *Procedia Environmental Sciences*, 14, 288-297.
- Dredge, D. (2006). Policy networks and the local organisation of tourism. *Tourism Management*, 27(2), 269-280.
- Edwards, D., Griffin, T., & Hayllar, B. (2008). Urban tourism research: developing an agenda. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(4), 1032-1052.

- Eusébio, C., Carneiro, M. J., Kastenholz, E., Figueiredo, E., & da Silva, D. S. (2017). Who is consuming the countryside? An activity-based segmentation analysis of the domestic rural tourism market in Portugal. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 31, 197-210.
- Falaster, C., Zanin, L. M., & Guerrazzi, L. A. (2017). Institutional theory in tourism research: new opportunities from an evolving theory. *Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa em Turismo*, 11(2), 270-293.
- Faulkner, D. O., & de Rond, M. (2000). *Cooperative strategy: Economic, business and organizational issues*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Flagestad, A., & Hope, C. A. (2001). Strategic success in winter sports destinations: A sustainable value creation perspective. *Tourism Management*, 22(5), 445-461.
- Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research (5th ed.)*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Ford, C. R., Wang, Y., & Vestal, A. (2012). Power asymmetries in tourism distribution networks. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 755-779.
- Framke, W. (2001). *The 'destination': A problematic concept*. Paper presented at 10th-19-20. October 2001 Nordic Tourism Research Conference, Vasa.
- Freeman, L. C. (1978). Centrality in Social Networks: Conceptual Clarification. *Social Networks*, 1(3), 215-239.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston, Pitman.
- Freeman, S. (2018). Utilizing Multi-Grounded Theory in a Dissertation: Reflections and Insights. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(5), 1160-1175.
- Fyall, A., & Garrod, B. (2005). *Tourism marketing: A collaborative approach*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Fyall, A., Garrod, B., & Wang, Y. (2012). Destination collaboration: A critical review of theoretical approaches to a multi-dimensional phenomenon. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1-2), 10-26.
- Fyall, A., Oakley, B., & Weiss, A. (2000). Theoretical perspectives applied to inter-organizational collaboration on Britain's inland waterways. *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration*, 1(1), 89-112.

- Gasson, S. (2004). Rigor in grounded theory research: An interpretive perspective on generating theory from qualitative field studies. In M. Whitman & A. Woszczyński (Eds.), *The Handbook of information systems research* (pp. 79-102). Hershey, PA: IGI.
- Glaser, B. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 481-510.
- Graci, S. (2013). Collaboration and partnership development for sustainable tourism. *Tourism Geographies*, 15(1), 25-42.
- Gulati, R. (1998). Alliances and networks. *Strategic Management Journal*, 19(4), 293-317.
- Haj-Yehia, K., & Erez, M. (2018). The impact of the ERASMUS program on cultural identity: A case study of an Arab Muslim female student from Israel. *Women's studies international forum*, 70, 32-38.
- Hallak, R., Brown, G., & Lindsay, N. J. (2012). The place identity-performance relationship among tourism entrepreneurs: A structural equation modelling analysis. *Tourism Management*, 33(1), 143-154.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: who needs identity? In S. Hall, & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1-17). London: Sage.
- Hatipoglu, B., Alvarez, M. D., & Ertuna, B. (2016). Barriers to stakeholder involvement in the planning of sustainable tourism: The case of the Thrace region in Turkey. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 111, 306-317.
- Haukeland, J. V., Daugstad, K., & Vistad, O. I. (2011). Harmony or Conflict? A Focus Group Study on Traditional Use and Tourism Development in and around Rondane and Jotunheimen National Parks in Norway. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 11(1), 13-37.
- Hillep, P., Pärnamets, R., Trubetskoi, E., Ender, J., Eik, L., Viin, T., ... Peil, N. (2012). Maaturismi uuring 2012 [Rural Tourism Research 2012]. Estonia: Põllumajandusministeerium. https://www.agri.ee/sites/default/files/public/juurkataloog/UURINGUD/uuring_maaturism_2012.pdf. Accessed 14.03.17.

- Hogg, M. A., Abrams, D., Otten, S., & Hinkle, S. (2004). The social identity perspective: Intergroup relations, self-conception, and small groups. *Small Group Research*, 35(3), 246-276.
- Hristov, D., Minocha, S., & Ramkissoon, H. (2018). Transformation of destination leadership networks. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 28, 239-250.
- Islam, G. (2014). Social identity theory. In T. Teo (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of critical psychology* (pp. 1781-1783). Springer.
- Jaafar, M., Rasoolimanesh, S., & Lonik, K. (2015). Tourism growth and entrepreneurship: Empirical analysis of development of rural highlands. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 14, 17-24.
- Jaakson, R. (1996). Tourism in transition in post-soviet Estonia. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(3), 617-634.
- Jaeger, K., & Mykletun, R. J. (2009). The Festivalscape of Finnmark. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 9(2-3), 327-348.
- Jamal, T. B., & Getz, D. (1995). Collaboration theory and community tourism planning. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22, 186-204.
- Jap, S. D., & Anderson, E. (2007). Testing a life-cycle theory of cooperative inter-organizational relationships movement across stages and performance. *Management Science*, 53(2), 260-275.
- Jarvis, J., & Kallas, P. (2008). Estonian Tourism and the Accession Effect: The Impact of European Union Membership on the Contemporary Development Patterns of the Estonian Tourism Industry. *Tourism Geographies*, 10(4), 474-494.
- Jesus, C., & Franco, M. (2016). Cooperation networks in tourism: A study of hotels and rural tourism establishments in an inland region of Portugal. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 29, 165-175.
- Jóhannesson, G. T. (2005). Tourism translations: Actor–Network Theory and tourism research. *Tourist Studies*, 5(2), 133-150.
- Jones, T. M., & Wicks, A. C. (1999). Convergent stakeholder theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(2), 206-221.
- Kaldoja, E. (2011). Brändi “Romantiline Rannatee” kasutus ja arenguperspektiivid siht- kohapiirkonna toote- ja teenusepakujate seas [The brand “Romantic Coastline” futility and development perspectives among the service providers in the destination]. <https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=GwjkW6L>

UAYbrrgThjLOwCQ&q=Brändi+”Romantiline+Rannatee”
 +kasutus+ja +arenguperspektiivid+sihtkohapiirkonna+toote-
 +ja+teenusepakujate+seas+& oq=Brändi+”Romantiline+Ranna-
 tee”+kasutus+ja+arenguperspektiivid +sihtkohapiirkonna+toote-
 +ja+teenusepakujate+seas+&gs_l=psy-ab.3...2892. 2892.0.4580.4.
 2.0.0.0.0.0.1.0....0...1c.2.64.psy-ab..3.1.83.6..35i39k1.83. qA35M8_
 oK_g Accessed 08.01.2019.

- Kapera, I. (2018). Sustainable tourism development efforts by local governments in Poland. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 40, 581-588.
- Karoles-Viia, K. (2018). Külastajaseire Riigimetsa Majandamise Keskuses [Visitor Monitoring in the National Forest Management]. [http://pk.emu.ee/userfiles/instituudid/pk/file/PKI/loodusturismikonv/KERLI_KAROLES_VIIA_RMK_Külastajaseire_%2013_03_2018_7.pdf](http://pk.emu.ee/userfiles/instituudid/pk/file/PKI/loodusturismikonv/KERLI_KAROLES_VIIA_RMK_Kulastajaseire_%2013_03_2018_7.pdf) Accessed 18.02.19.
- Kask, T. (2008). The Development of Pärnu Resort. <http://resort175.weebly.com/resort.html> Accessed 14.01.20.
- Kaupila, P., Saarinen, J., & Leinonen, R. (2009). Sustainable Tourism Planning and Regional Development in Peripheries: A Nordic View. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 9(4), 424-435.
- Kelle, U. (2005). “Emergence” vs. “Forcing” of empirical data? A crucial problem of “Grounded Theory” reconsidered. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(2). <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/467/1000> Accessed 22.03.21.
- Keohane, R., & Nye, J. S. (1977). *Power and interdependence*. Oxford: Longman.
- Kernel, P. (2005). Creating and implementing a model for sustainable development in tourism enterprises. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 13, 151-164.
- Khazaei, A., Elliot, S., & Joppe, M. (2015). An application of stakeholder theory to advance community participation in tourism planning: the case for engaging immigrants as fringe stakeholders. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 23(7), 1049-1062.
- Kneafsey, M. (1998). Tourism and Place Identity: A case-study in rural Ireland. *Irish Geography*, 31(2), 111-123

- Larsen, L., Harlan, S. L., & Bolin, B. (2004). Bonding and bridging: understanding the relationship between social capital and civic action. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 24(1), 64-77.
- Lemmetyinen, A., & Go, F. M. (2009). The key capabilities required for managing tourism business networks. *Tourism Management*, 30, 31-40.
- Levine, S., & White, P. E. (1961). Exchange as a conceptual framework for the study of interorganizational relationships. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 5(4), 583-601.
- Light, D. (2001). 'Facing the future': Tourism and identity-building in post-socialist Romania. *Political Geography*, 20(8), 1053-1074.
- Lind, M., & Goldkuhl, G. (2006). How to Develop a Multi-Grounded Theory: the evolution of a business process theory. *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, 13(2).
- Liu, Y., & Cheng, J. (2016). Place identity: How tourism changes our destination. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 8(2), 76-85.
- London, W. R., Lohmann, G., & Moyle, B. D. (2021). Network fragmentation and risk in cruise tourism infrastructure development: Auckland, New Zealand. *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, 9(1), 336-347.
- Long, P. (1997). Researching tourism partnerships organisations: From practice to theory to methodology. In P. E. Murphy (Eds.). *Quality management in urban tourism*. Chichester, NY: Wiley.
- Luik-Lindsaar, H., Roots, J., Põldaru, R., & Põder, A. (2018). Performance evaluation of rural areas: the case of Estonian rural municipalities before the administrative reform. *Agronomy Research*, 16(3), 806-820.
- Luthe, T., & Wyss, R. (2014). Assessing and planning resilience in tourism. *Tourism Management*, 44, 161-163.
- Manente, M., & Minghetti, V. (2006). Destination management organizations and actors. In: D. Buhalis, & C. Costa (Eds.), *Tourism business frontiers: Consumers, products and industry* (pp. 228-237). Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Mason, P., & Cheyne, J. (2000). Residents' attitudes to proposed tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(2), 391-411.
- Merinero-Rodríguez, R., & Pulido-Fernandez, J. I. (2016). Analysing relationships in tourism: A review. *Tourism Management*, 54, 122-135.

- Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. G., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 853-886.
- Mowforth, M., & Munt, I. (2016). *Tourism and sustainability: Development, globalisation and new tourism in the third world (4 ed.)*. Routledge, London and New York.
- Murdoch, J. 1998. The spaces of actor-network theory. *Geoforum*, 29(4), 357-374.
- Nguyen, T. Q. T., Young, T., Johnson, P., & Wearing, S. (2019). Conceptualising networks in sustainable tourism development. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 32, 100575.
- Novelli, M., Schmitz, B., & Spencer, T. (2006). Networks, clusters and innovation in tourism: A UK experience. *Tourism Management*, 27, 1141-1152.
- Norris, P. (2002). The bridging and bonding role of online communities. *Press/Politics*, 7(3), 3-13.
- Nunkoo, R., & Gursoy, D. (2012). Residents' support for tourism: An identity perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39, 243-268.
- Otte, E., & Rousseau, R. (2002). Social network analysis: a powerful strategy, also for the information sciences. *Journal of Information Science*, 28(6), 441-453.
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and policy in mental health*, 42(5), 533-544.
- Palmer, A., Koenig-Lewis, N., & Jones, L. E. M. (2013). The effects of residents' social identity and involvement on their advocacy of incoming tourism. *Tourism Management*, 38, 142-151.
- Park, S. Y., & Kohler, T. (2019). Collaboration for sustainable tourism through strategic bridging: A case of travel2change. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 25(1), 99-110.
- Parker, S. (2000). Collaboration on Tourism Policy Making: Environmental and Commercial Sustainability in Bonaire, NA. In B, Bramwell & B, Lane. (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability*. Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications, 200-229.

- Parkhe, A. (1993). Strategic Alliance Structuring: A Game Theoretic and Transaction Cost Examination of Interfirm Cooperation. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 36(4), 794-829.
- Partelow, S., & Nelson, K. (2020). Social networks, collective action and the evolution of governance for sustainable tourism on the Gili Islands, Indonesia. *Marine Policy*, 112.
- Peroff, D. M., Deason, G. G., Seekamp, E., & Iyengar, J. (2017). Integrating frameworks for evaluating tourism partnerships: An exploration of success within the life cycle of a collaborative ecotourism development effort. *Journal of Recreation and Tourism*, 17, 100-111.
- Pollock, A. (2015). *Social entrepreneurship in tourism. The conscious travel approach*. TIPSE tourism. <http://www.conscious.travel/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Conscious-Tourism-TIPSE-2016-1.pdf> Accessed 23.03.21.
- Porter, M. E. (1990). *Competitive advantage of nations: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of network governance: Structure, management, and effectiveness. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(2), 229-252.
- Pugalis, L. (2011). The regional lacuna: A preliminary map of the transition from regional development agencies to local economic partnerships. *Regions Magazine*, 281(1), 6-9.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone*. New York: Free Press.
- Põder, A., Viira, A. H., & Värnik, R. (2017) Firm entries and exits in Estonian urban municipalities: urban hinterlands and rural peripheries, 2005-2012. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 48(3), 285-307.
- Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly. (2015). MTÜ Pärnu Lahe Partnerluskogu tegevuspiirkonna strateegia 2014-2020 [Strategy of the Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly 2014-2020]. Audru, Estonia: Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly. http://www.plp.ee/net2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=425&Itemid=&lang=et Accessed 15.10 2018.
- Raisi, H., Baggio, R., Barratt-Pugh, L., Willson, G. (2020). A network perspective of knowledge transfer in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 80, 102817.

- Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Ringlebc, C. M., Jaafar, M., & Ramayahd, T. (2017). Urban vs. rural destinations: Residents' perceptions, community participation and support for tourism development. *Tourism Management*, 60, 147-158.
- Reed, M. G. (1997). Power relations and community-based tourism planning. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(3), 566-591.
- Ren, C. (2010). Assembling the socio-material destination: An actor-network approach to cultural tourism studies. In G, Richards & W, Munsters. (Eds.), *Cultural Tourism Research Methods*. Oxfordshire, UK & Cambridge, USA: CABI, 199-208.
- Restrepo, N., Lozano, S., & Clavé, S. A. (2021). Measuring institutional thickness in tourism: An empirical application based on social network analysis. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 37, 100770.
- Richter, L. K. (1983). Tourism politics and political science: A case of not so benign neglect. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 10(3), 313-335.
- Ring, P. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1994). Developmental processes of cooperative inter-organizational relationships. *The Academy of Management Review*, 19(1), 90-118.
- Roberts, L., & Simpson, F. (2000). Developing partnership approaches to tourism in Central and Eastern Europe. In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.). *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 230-246). Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Ross, S. (1973). The Economic Theory of Agency: The Principal's Problem. *The American Economic Review*, 63(2), 134-139.
- Salvatore, R., Chiodo, E., & Fantini, A. (2018). Tourism transition in peripheral rural areas: Theories, issues and strategies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 68, 41-51.
- Scott, N., Baggio, R., & Cooper, C. (2008). *Network analysis and tourism from theory to practice. Aspects of tourism*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Seeger, M. W. (2002). Chaos and crisis: Propositions for a general theory of crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 28(4), 329-337.
- Segrestin, B. (2005). Partnering to explore: The Renault–Nissan alliance as a forerunner of new cooperative patterns. *Research Policy*, 34(5), 657-672.

- Selin, S., & Chavez, D. (1995). Developing an evolutionary tourism partnership model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22, 844-856.
- Sheng, L. (2011). Regional Competition and Sustainable Development: A Game Theory Model for Tourism Destinations. *European Planning Studies*, 19(4), 669-681.
- Shepherd, J., & Ioannides, D. (2020). Useful funds, disappointing framework: tourism stakeholder experiences of INTERREG. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 20(5), 485-502.
- Shweder, R. A., Goodnow, J. J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R. A., Markus, H. R., & Miller, P. J. (2006). The cultural psychology of development: One Mind, Many Mentalities. In R. M. Lerner, & W. Damon (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 716-792). John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Stacey, R. (2007). *Strategic management and organisational dynamics: The challenge of complexity to ways of thinking about organisations*. Fifth edition. London: FT Prentice-Hall.
- Statistics Estonia [Statistikaamet]. (2020). TU110: Capacity of accommodation establishments, accommodated tourists and nights spent by county. Estonia: Statistics Estonia. <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TU110> Accessed 08.01.21
- Statistics Estonia [Statistikaamet]. (2018). RV0213: Components of change in population figure by county. <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?lang=en> Accessed 15.06.19
- Stets, J. E., & Biga, C. F. (2003). Bringing identity theory into environmental sociology. *Sociological Theory*, 21, 398-423.
- Stevenson, N., & Airey, D., & Miller, G. (2009). Complexity theory and tourism policy research. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 2(3).
- Strauss, A. L. (1978). *Negotiations: Varieties, contexts, processes, and social order*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory, procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strzelecka, M., & Wicks, B. E. (2015). Community participation and empowerment in rural post-communist societies: Lessons from the

- leader approach in Pomerania, Poland. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 12(4), 381-397.
- Strzelecka, M., Boley, B. B., & Woosnam, K. M. (2017). Place attachment and empowerment: Do residents need to be attached to be empowered? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 66, 61-73.
- Stryker, S. (1968). Identity salience and role performance. The importance of symbolic interaction theory for family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30, 558-564.
- Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present and future of identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63, 284-297.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of social conflict. In: W. G Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Brooks/Cole.
- Teeroovengadam, V. (2019). Environmental identity and ecotourism behaviours: examination of the direct and indirect effects. *Tourism Review*, 74(2), 280-292.
- Tinsley, R., & Lynch, P. (2001). Small tourism business networks and destination development. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 20(4), 367-378.
- Tremblay, P. (1998). The economic organization of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(4), 837-859.
- Unwin, T. (1996). Tourist development in Estonia: Images, sustainability, and integrated rural development. *Tourism Management*, 17(4), 265-276.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze and the "environment"*. Sage.
- Urquhart, C. (2001). An encounter with grounded theory: Tackling the practical and philosophical issues. In E. M. Trauth (Ed.), *Qualitative research in IS: Issues and trends* (pp. 104-140). Hershey, PA: Idea Group.
- Uzzi, B., & Spiro, J. (2005). Collaboration and creativity: The small world problem. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(2), 447-504.
- Van der Zee, E., Gerrets, A, M., & Vanneste, D. (2017). Complexity in the governance of tourism networks: Balancing between external pressure and internal expectations. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6, 296-308.

- Viira, A. H., Pöder, A., & Värnik, R. (2009). 20 years of transition-institutional reforms and the adaptation of production in Estonian agriculture. *Agrarwirtschaft*, 58(7), 286-295.
- Vicsek, L., Kiraly, G., & Konya, H. (2016). Networks in the social sciences: Comparing actor-network theory and social network analysis. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 7(2), 77-102.
- Vogt, C., Jordan, E., Grewe, N., & Kruger, L. (2016). Collaborative tourism planning and subjective well-being in a small island destination. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5, 36-43.
- Wang, S., Zhou, L., Lee, S., & King, C. (2014). Analysis of residents' social identity, tourism engagement, and propensity for tourism advocacy. In J. S. Chen (Eds.), *Advances in hospitality and leisure: Vol. 10* (pp. 109-129). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994). *Social network analysis: Methods and applications*, 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weaver, R. D. (2009). Microeconomics of collaboration and network configuration. *British Food Journal*, 111(8), 746-761.
- Webster, F. E. (1992). The changing role of marketing in the organization. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(4), 1-17.
- Wei, J., Zheng, W., & Zhang, M. (2011). Social capital and knowledge transfer: A multi-level analysis. *Human Relations*, 64(11), 1401-1423.
- Weick, K. E. (1993). The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 628-652.
- Weigert, A. J. (1997). *Self, interaction and the natural environment: Refocusing our eyesight*. SUNY Press.
- Wellman, B. (1988). Structural analysis: From method and metaphor to theory and substance. In B. Wellman & S. D. Berkowitz (Eds.), *Social structures a network approach*, (pp.19-61). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whetten, D. A. (2006). Albert and Whetten revisited. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(3), 219-234.
- Wood, D. (1991). Corporate Social Performance Revisited. *The Academy of Management Review*, 16(4), 691-718.
- Wood, D. J., & Gray, B. (1991). Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *Journal of Applied Behavior Science*, 27(2), 139-162.

- Worthington, B. (2001). Riding the 'J' curve—Tourism and successful transition in Estonia? *Post-Communist Economies*, 13(3).
- Wray, K., Espiner, S., & Perkins, C. H. (2010). Cultural Clash: Interpreting Established Use and New Tourism Activities in Protected Natural Areas. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 10(3), 272-290.
- Öberg, C. (2016). What creates a collaboration level identity? *Journal of Business Research*, 69, 3220-3230.
- Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions: epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education*, 48(2), 311-325.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

1. Personal background of the stakeholders and connections with the Romantic Coastline

- a) What organisation do you represent?
- b) Please describe the field of operation (also the size and number of employees) of your enterprise or organisation?
- c) How long have you been active?
- d) Please describe the everyday activities of your enterprise or organisation?
- e) Who are your clients?
- f) How long have you been part of the Romantic Coastline (RC)?
- g) Please describe how you started with the RC?
- h) How were you asked to join the RC? Additional question: was there any special event or personal invitation?
- i) Why do you agree with and what motivated you to join the RC? Additional questions: what are the reasons behind your involvement with the RC, and what benefits did you expect to receive?
- j) Please describe why you stayed/or left the RC?
- k) What are your activities in the RC?
- l) Is your organisation a member of other regional tourism collaboration networks aside from the RC? Please elaborate.
- m) An additional question to the leaders/managers of the RC and representative of the Pärnumaa Tourism Foundation. How did the collaboration start between Pärnu town and the RC? Please describe the process.

2. The leadership of the Romantic Coastline

- a) Please describe the role of the leadership and management of the RC.
- b) What is your opinion on the leadership and management of the RC?

- c) Are you involved with the management of the RC? Please elaborate.
- d) Please describe the communication between your organisation and the leadership of the RC?
- e) Please describe the regular stakeholder meetings and other events related to the RC?
- f) How are the leaders of the RC involved with the collaboration between the RC members?
- g) Are the activities and actions of the RC leaders and management trustworthy?
- h) How have the leadership and management changed during your time in the RC?

3. The RC influence, impact and benefits on the region

- a) Please describe the main influence, impact and benefits of the RC to you, the Pärnu region and your community?
- b) How is the RC shaping the (tourism) image of the region?
- c) How important is the RC as a regional tourism development organisation?
- d) Please describe the role of the Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly as a local destination management organisation?
- e) How is the RC influencing regional tourism policy?
- f) Are Pärnu town and the RC one or separate tourism destinations? Please explain.
- g) How is the collaboration developed through the RC influencing the Pärnu region?
- h) What aims of the RC have been fulfilled and what aims are yet to be?
- i) How do you evaluate the sustainability of the RC?
- j) How is the RC benefiting Estonian tourism?

4. Collaboration between the RC members

- a) What are the benefits that you are/were receiving as a member of the RC?
- b) How is the membership of the RC benefitting your home community?

- c) Did your organisation collaborate with other enterprises/ organisations before you joined the RC?
- d) How is the RC helping to establish partnerships between the members?
- e) With which stakeholders/partners are you mostly collaborating?
- f) Please describe the collaborative relationships between other stakeholders, enterprises, organisations and community members?
- g) What kind of services, products or experiences are you providing in collaboration?
- h) How do you combine your services with other partners?
- i) How is collaboration helping you in everyday activities?
- j) How has the collaboration between the RC members changed over the years?
- k) How is the distance from Pärnu town influencing the intensity of the collaborative activities?
- l) How is the RC and Pärnu town changing clients?
- m) Is the RC as a tourist route with collaboration between different stakeholders attractive to visitors? Please elaborate.
- n) What services, products or experiences are you planning to develop further with other partners in the future?
- o) Which client segment do you want to focus more on in the future with other partners?

5. Financing

- a) How is the EU financing influencing the RC, region and partnerships?
- b) How is the RC being funded?
- c) How and with what (e.g., money, time) are you supporting the RC? Please elaborate.
- d) Which RC partnership activities or events are you or your organisation supporting?
- e) Has your organisation received EU financing through the Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly?
- f) Is the financing model of the RC sustainable? Please elaborate.
- g) What do you think will happen with the RC if the EU funding is reduced or ends?

6. Relationships between the members

- a) What are the aspects that are negatively/positively influencing the RC, collaboration and relationships between the partners? Please elaborate.
- b) Please describe how are the relationships between the members, leaders and management changed during your involvement with the RC?
- c) Do you trust other members of the RC and how has this changed during your time in the RC?
- d) How are relationships with the RC management and other members influencing regional collaboration?

7. The future of the Romantic Coastline

- a) Please describe what in your opinion is the current status of the RC?
- b) Please describe what your opinion has been the success of the RC?
- c) What are the future aims and plans of the RC?
- d) Are you planning to remain with the RC in the future? Please elaborate.
- e) What is your opinion regarding RC continuity and its future role in the region?
- f) What do you think will happen with the RC in the future?
- g) Is there anything else that you wish to talk about or discuss concerning the RC?

Appendix B

1. Background information

- a) How long has your company/organisation been operating in the area?
- b) What are the company's main products and services?
- c) How is your organisation involved in the development of tourism in the region?
- d) How does local culture relate to tourism in the Pärnu area?

- e) Do you have other occupations beside tourism entrepreneurship? Please explain.

2. Visitors

- a) What is the visitor profile of your business?
- b) Might your visitors also be interested in other tourism experiences in the region?
- c) What circumstances could prevent your customers from visiting the countryside?
- d) How do visitors move around in the Pärnu region?
- e) How are visitors shared between different networks and destinations?
- f) How do you find your clients?
- g) How do you do your marketing?
- h) What local values do you offer to your clients?

3. Networking and collaboration

- a) What does tourism collaboration mean in the Pärnu area?
- b) How is the local DMO influencing tourism collaboration development in the region?
- c) Does your company belong to a local collaboration network? If so, who are the other members of this network and what kind of collaborative relationships do you have with them?
- d) What other companies, partners and organisations does your company work with?
- e) Please explain why you collaborate with them.
- f) Is the network that you belong to central to the town or town/country or country businesses? Please explain.
- g) How do you fulfil your entrepreneurial ambitions in the collaboration?
- h) How is tourism collaboration in the Pärnu region facilitated and governed?
- i) Does your company collaborate with entrepreneurs from the rural area of Pärnu County? Please explain.
- j) How would collaboration with other tourism companies help to value/expand/improve the experiences you offer?

- k) How would you explain the tourism collaboration between Pärnu town and the rural area?
- l) Please describe what kind of tourism collaboration networks are in the Pärnu area?
- m) How are these networks governed? What is the role of the different actors here?
- n) During the operation of your company, are there any changes in the collaboration between the town of Pärnu and the rural area? What are these changes?
- o) How are different regional networks connected?
- p) What frames tourism networks in the Pärnu region?
- q) What kinds of links exist between different networks and destinations in the Pärnu area?
- r) How are information and knowledge shared in and between different destinations?
- s) How are different collaboration networks related to the place where they exist?

4. Regional destinations

- a) In your opinion, what could be the tourist destinations of Pärnu County?
- b) What local values exist in different regional destinations?
- c) How are these destinations connected?
- d) How are these destinations governed? Can you please explain the role of the different actors?
- e) Do the town and the rural area form a common or separate destination? Why?
- f) In your opinion, how could a change in the tourism market (focus more on individual visitors, personal experiences, etc.) affect collaboration between the town of Pärnu and the county?
- g) How could administrative reform and other institutional changes affect collaboration between the town and rural tourism companies?
- h) Please explain how different natural and cultural values are related to local tourism?
- i) Can you explain what kinds of connections exist between the different regional destinations?

5. Identity

- a) Please describe what the Pärnu region/your community/town means to you in relation to regional tourism collaboration?
- b) How do you see yourself within the collaboration network?
- c) What do you have in common with your collaboration partners and what separates you?
- d) How is collaboration development affecting your personal aims and goals?
- e) How are local cultural, natural and other values tied into the tourism experiences that you offer?
- f) How do you relate with these values and the values of others in the collaboration?
- g) How are these values influencing collaboration with others?
- h) How are common values created through the collaboration?
- i) How is something that is shared created in the collaborative environment?

Appendix C

1. Background information

- a) Please describe your tourism entrepreneurial activities.
- b) How is your organisation involved in the development of tourism in the region?
- c) Do you have other occupations beside tourism entrepreneurship? Please explain.
- d) How do you relate with the values that frame Lahemaa National Park?

2. Visitors

- a) What is the visitor profile of Lahemaa National Park?
- b) How do you find your clients?
- c) What local values are offered to the visitors?
- d) How does the environmentally sensitive region affect visitor movement?

3. Collaboration and networking

- a) What does tourism collaboration mean in Lahemaa National Park?
- b) Does your company belong to a local collaboration network? If so, who are the other members of this network and what kind of collaborative relationships do you have with them?
- c) What kind of aspects do you have in common with your collaboration partners and what separates you?
- d) How is tourism collaboration in the Lahemaa region facilitated and governed?
- e) What frames tourism networks in the Lahemaa region?
- f) How have administrative reform and other institutional changes affected collaboration in the park?

4. Identity

- a) How do you see yourself within the collaboration network?
- b) How are local cultural, natural and other values tied into the tourism experiences that you offer?
- c) How are these values influencing collaboration with others?
- d) How are common values created through the collaboration?
- e) How do you relate with these values and the values of others in the collaboration?
- f) How is something that is shared created in the collaborative environment?
- g) How is a collaboration network related to the place where it exists?
- h) How is collaboration with others affecting your personal aims and goals?

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

KOOSTÖÖ EESTI MAATURISMIS

Sissejuhatus

Koostöö erinevate turismiasjaliste vahel on tähtis kogukonnapõhise maaturismi arengu soodustamiseks (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Koostöö võimaldab ühendada ressursse, suurendada turismiasjaliste vastupidavust turumuutustele, luua konkurentsieelist ja uudeid turismielamusi (Jesus & Franco, 2016; Luthe & Wyss, 2014; Van der Zee et al., 2017).

Eestis on taasiseseisvuse järgsel üleminekuperioodil mõjutanud maapiirkondi suuremad institutsioonilised muudatused ja paljud loodusressurssidel põhinevad põllumajandusega seotud ametid on nüüdseks kadunud. Selliste muutuste järel on tarvis leida maapiirkondade elanikele uusi sissetulekuallikaid (Viira et al., 2009), millest üks on turism. Viimase aja suurem muutus Eesti maaturismis on liitumine Euroopa Liiduga, mille liikmesus pakub ettevõtjatele rahastamisvõimalusi ja piiride avamine toob ka uusi külastajaid (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008). Tänapäeval on enamik Eesti maaturismiettevõtetest väikeettevõtted, mis pakuvad majutuse, toitlustuse ning aktiivse puhkuse teenuseid ja giiditeenust (I, II, III). Hoolimata maaturismi kiirest kasvust, mille tõi kaasa Euroopa Liidu liikmesus, on Eesti maaturismil palju probleeme, nagu ettevõtjate kehv investeerimisvõime, sektori arengu sõltumine ELi rahastusest, toodete ja teenuste pakkumise hooajalisus ning kvalifitseeritud tööjõu leidmise keerukus (Hillep et al., 2012). Koostöövõrgustike loomine võib aidata neid probleeme lahendada.

Varasemad turismialase koostöö uuringud (Augustyn & Knowles, 2000; Bornhorst et al., 2010; Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) on keskendunud peamiselt aspektidele, mis mõjutavad koostöö dünaamilist arengut, rahastust, koostööpartnerite suhteid, kommunikatsiooni, koostöö juhtimist ja koostöö ametlikku või mitteametlikku olemust.

Turismikoostöö on seotud selle keskkonnaga, kus see toimub. Eestis algas turumajanduse printsiipidel põhinev turism pärast taasiseseisvumist 1991. aastal, kui avanes ülemaailmne turismiturg (Jaakson, 1996; Worthington,

2001), kuid tänapäeval on Eesti globaalses kontekstis endiselt arenev sihtkoht (Cottrell & Raadik-Cottrell, 2015). Varasem turismialane teaduskirjandus näitab, et postsovetlikus riigis nagu Eesti on ühiskonnas usalduse tase madal ja puuduvad koostöö ajalugu ning traditsioonid. See aga takistab koostöövõrgustike loomist (Bjørnskov, 2007; Czernek, 2013). Mitu varasemat uuringut on keskendunud turismikoostööle postsovetlikes riikides, nagu Bulgaaria, Rumeenia ja Poola (Czaron & Czernek, 2016; Czernek, 2013; Czernek & Czaron, 2016; Czernek et al., 2017; Kapera, 2018; Roberts & Simpson, 2000; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015), kuid Balti riigid pole akadeemilises kirjanduses esiplaanil olnud (Cottrell & Raadik-Cottrell, 2015) ning endiselt on vastuseta küsimused koostöövõrgustike loomise kohta turismivaldkonnas. Need küsimused puudutavad aspekte, mis mõjutavad koostööprotsessi jätkusuutlikkust, erinevate piirkondlike turismiasjaliste vahelise koostöö kujunemist, koostöösuhete vastastikust kasu ja koostöö muutumise protsessi ning ebaedu.

Käesolev doktoritöö on süntees kolmest teadusartiklist (I– III), mis keskenduvad Eesti maaturismi koostöö erinevatele aspektidele eesmärgiga selgitada välja, mis mõjutab Eestis erinevate maaturismi asjaliste koostöö arengut ja jätkusuutlikkust.

Maaturismialast koostööd on Eestis pidevalt alustatud, aga tihti lõppevad need algatused edutult. Piirkondlikul tasandil on maaturism rohkemal või vähemal määral seotud muude piirkondlike võrgustikega. Tavaliselt hõlmab suurem turismipiirkond ka linna. Kui piirkondlik strateegiline eesmärk on leida paremaid sidemeid maa- ja linnaturismi vahel, peaksid need kaks osalist tegema koostööd, et parandada konkurentsivõimet laiemalt ning meelitada ligi investoreid (Tremblay, 1998). Selline võrgustumine aitab jagada teadmisi, teavet ja muid ressursse, et täita eesmärgi, mida üksikudel ettevõtjatel on keeruline saavutada (Beritelli, 2011). Võrgustumise kaudu saab leevendada turismiettevõtete killustatust ja geograafilise leviku probleeme (Scott et al., 2008). Turismiasjalised saavad osa suuremate tuludest ja piirkondlikud kogukonnad erinevaid sotsiaalseid hüvesid (Novelli et al., 2006). Probleem on aga selles, et turismikoostööd on erinevate huvidega rühmade ja üksikisikute vahel väga keeruline laiemalt soodustada ning säilitada. Tavaliselt saadab edu kitsamat turismikoostööd, kuid ka siis on see keeruline, sest need ettevõtjad, kes koostööd teevad, konkureerivad klientide nimel omavahel (Van der Zee et al., 2017). Teine põhjus, miks maa- ja linnaettevõtjate

vahelist koostöövõrgustikku on raske luua, on see, et nende ettevõtjate ettevõtlus- ja sotsiaalne keskkond on erinev. Linnaturismiettevõtted on tavaliselt peamistele turgudele lähemal ja tegutsevad suuremas mahus, samas kui maaturismiettevõtjad on enamasti väikesed pere- ja elustiiliettevõtted (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016; Dimitrovski et al., 2012). Erinevus avaldub ka selles, et maa- ja linnaetevõtted loovad erinevaid koostöösuhteid. Suuremad linnaetevõtted loovad tavaliselt ametlikke koostöösuhteid (Czernek et al., 2017), kuid maaetevõtete vahelised suhted on mitteformaalsed ja põhinevad usaldusel (I– III). Akadeemilises kirjanduses on vähe käsitlust leidnud, millised on maa- ja linnaturismi ettevõtjate vahelised sidemed, kuidas nad saavad teha koostööd piirkondlikul tasandil ja mida on vaja sellise koostöö edendamiseks. Maa- ja linnaetevõtjate vaheliste võrgustike loomine võib osutuda tõsiseks katsumuseks, sest nad tegutsevad erinevates ettevõtluskeskkondades. I artiklis selgitatakse välja maa- ja linnaturismi ettevõtete ning võrgustikevaheliste koostöösidemete osa.

Turism kujundab kohalikku identiteeti (Light, 2001; Segrestin, 2005) ning algatab kultuurilisi ja sotsiaalseid muutusi kohalikus keskkonnas (Bożętko, 2013). Teada on, et individuaalne ja kollektiivne identiteet mõjutavad inimeste valikuid sotsiaalses keskkonnas (Nunkoo & Cursoy, 2012; Stets & Biga, 2003; Stryker, 1968). Kui erinevad turismiasjalised soovivad alustada omavahelist koostööd, kerkib esiplaanile nende erinev sotsiaalne, kultuuriline, ettevõtlus- ja ametialane taust (Bramwell & Lane, 2000) ning koostööprotsess hakkab kujundama nende identiteeti (Segrestin, 2005). Koostööprotsessis hakkavad turismiasjalised moodustama ühist koostööidentiteeti, mis on üks kollektiivse identiteedi vormidest (Öberg, 2016). Uuringud näitavad (Nunkoo & Cursoy, 2012; Stryker, 1968), et individuaalne identiteet kujundab kollektiivse identiteedi. Jagatud koostööidentiteedi loomisprotsessiga on tavaliselt seotud paljud erinevad turismiasjalised. Siiski pole teada, kuidas kujuneb jagatud koostööidentiteet erinevate individuaalsete identiteetide keskkonnas ning kuidas see aitab turismiasjalistel saavutada omaenda ja koostöö eesmärke. Seetõttu selgitatakse II artiklis individuaalsete identiteetide osa jagatud ühise identiteedi loomise protsessis, kuidas toimub koostööidentiteedi loomine ja selle protsessi hõlbustamine.

Mõnedes koostööuuringutes (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Caffyn, 2000; Jap & Anderson, 2007; Peroff et al., 2017; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994) tõstetakse esile koostöösuhteid moodustava turismikoostöö elutsükli tähtsust.

2000. aastal tutvustas Caffyn turismipartnerluse elutsükli mudelit, mis on teoreetiline raamistik ja võimaldab analüüsida turismikoostööd elutsükli kontekstis. Koostöövõrgustikke iseloomustab nende ajutine olemasolu ja selle nähtuse mõistmiseks on vaja aru saada koostööprotsessi olemusest. Sageli alustatakse koostööd, et lahendada mõni konkreetne probleem (Caffyn, 2000), aga kui piirkondlik strateegiline eesmärk on turismi arengut laiemalt toetada, ei pruugi selline koostöölahendus olla piisav (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Uuringud (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) näitavad, et koostööd on lihtsam alustada ja edendada, kui tagada selle jätkusuutlikkus. Seega on tõenäoline, et varem või hiljem koostöö aeglustub, lõpeb või toimub mõni jätkustenaarium. Koostöö arendamise ajal on tähtis mõista selle kronoloogilisi muutusi, sest võib juhtuda ka nii, et koostöös osalejad ei saa täpselt aru, milline on koostöö staatus ja kas see on aktiivne või mitte. Siiani ei selgu turismikirjandusest, kuidas koostöö areneb erinevate jätkustenaariumite rakendumisel (Peroff et al., 2017). III artikkel katsetab turismipartnerluse elutsükli mudelit Pärnu turismipiirkonnas uute teadmiste saamiseks, mis aitaksid senisest paremini selgitada turismikoostöövõrgustiku elutsükli.

Töö eesmärgid ja uurimisküsimused

Selle lõputöö eesmärk on välja selgitada, mis mõjutab erinevate maaturismiasjaliste koostöö arengut ja jätkusuutlikkust Eestis.

Selles lõputöös vastatakse järgmistele uurimisküsimustele:

1. Milline on turismipiirkonna erinevate turismiettevõtjate ja alamvõrgustike koostöösidemete ning suhete olemus (I)?
2. Mis soodustab ja takistab piirkondliku turismi koostöövõrgustiku arenguprotsessi (I)?
3. Milline on individuaalsete identiteetide osa jagatud ühises koostööidentiteedi loomise protsessis (II)?
4. Kuidas tajuvad erinevad turismiasjalised jagatud koostööidentiteeti (II)?
5. Kuidas areneb maapiirkondade turismialane koostöö elukaarel (III)?

6. Mis mõjutab erinevates koostöötappides maaturismi asjaliste koostööd (III)?

Andmed ja metoodika

Selle doktoritöö peamised andmed on kogutud Pärnu linna ja maakonna turismiasjalistelt. Pärnu regioon on populaarne turismisihtkoht (Kask, 2008), kuid turism Pärnu regiooni maapiirkondades on arenenud linnast aeglasemalt ja 85% kõigist piirkondlikest külastustest tehakse Pärnu linna (Statistics Estonia, 2020). Uue kohaliku regionaalarengu strateegia eesmärk on edendada piirkondlikku turismialast koostöövõrgustikku nii, et piirkonna erinevate osade vahel tekiks senisest suurem sünergia. Samuti keskendutakse selles maapiirkondade ja linna ühisele arengule, mille eesmärk on pakkuda teenuseid kodu- ja välismaistele pere- ning konverentsituristidele (Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2030+, 2014). Turismi juhib piirkonnas peamiselt sihtasutus Pärnumaa Turism, kuid ka kohalikud LEADERi tegevusrühmad (Pärnu Lahe Partnerluskogu ja Roheline Jõemaa) toetavad turismi arendamist maal. Veel kuuluvad piirkonna turismiasjalised erinevatesse katuseorganisatsioonidesse, nagu Eesti Spaaliit ning Hotellide ja Restoranide Liit.

II artiklis kaasati terviklikumate andmete saamiseks ja võrdlemiseks teise uurimispiirkonna Lahemaa rahvuspargi turismiettevõtjad. Võrreldes Pärnumaaga võib Lahemaad iseloomustada kui maapiirkonda. Piirkond on tuntud oma loodusmaastike, matkaradade, randade, kohaliku ranniku, ajaloo ja mõisakultuuri poolest ning see on üks Euroopa tähtsamaid metsakaitsealasid. Lahemaa on populaarne looduspõhine turismi- ja suvepuhkuse sihtkoht, millel on rikkalik külastustaristu (Ausmeel et al., 2016). Piirkonna turismiettevõtted on tavaliselt mikroettevõtted, mis pakuvad majutust, toidlustust, giidi- või muid seiklus- ja looduspõhiseid turismiteenuseid. Turismi arendamine pargis on jaotatud kohalike omavalitsuste, Keskkonnaameti, Riigimetsa Majandamise Keskuse ja Lahemaa Turismiühingu vahel.

Antud doktoritöö metodoloogiana kasutatakse mitmekordselt põhistatud teooriat ja kvalitatiivseid uurimismeetodeid. Mitmekordselt põhistatud teooria koondab endas induktiivse ja deduktiivse lähenemise, mis võimaldab tugineda olemasolevale teooriale, kuid samal ajal sünteesida uurimisprotsessi käigus kogutud andmetest uusi teoreetilisi seisukohti (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

Peamiseks andmekogumismeetodiks olid antud töös poolstruktureeritud intervjuud, mis viidi läbi 2017. aasta aprillist kuni 2018. aasta maini. Kakskümmend seitse poolstruktureeritud intervjuud (III) tehti Pärnu maakonna maaturismi turismiasjalistega, kes kuulusid era- (15), avalikku (5) ja mittetulundussektoris (7). Lisaks tehti veel kümme intervjuud Pärnu linna (I, II) ja fookusrühma intervjuu Lahemaa rahvusparki turismiasjalistega (ühiksa liiget) (II). Pärnu piirkonnas valiti andmete kogumiseks individuaalsed intervjuud, sest piirkond on suur ning koosneb paljudest erinevatest kogukondadest, võrgustikest ja sihtkohtadest. Võrreldes Pärnuga on Lahemaa rahvuspark kompaktsem ja väiksem ning seal kasutati fookusrühma intervjuud. Intervjuude küsimustikud on leitavad töö lisadest.

Lisameetodina kasutati dokumendianalüüsi (III).

Töös kasutati sihipärast selektiivset valimit (Flick, 2014) eesmärgiga kaasata osalejaid igast omavalitsusest, maa- ja linnaturismi piirkondadest, kolmest sektorist, koostöö eestvedajaid, aktiivseid ja passiivseid liikmeid, uusi ning vanu liikmeid ja erinevate turismivaldkondade esindajaid. Valimi koostamisel koostati kahe uuringupiirkonna turismiasjaliste nimekiri, kasutades selleks ametlikke turismiinfokanaleid.

Töös kasutati neljaetapilist mitmekordselt põhistatud teooria andmete analüüsimise protsessi, mis võimaldab omavahelsobitada uurimisprotsessi käigus andmetest tulenevaid empiirilisi leide ja teoreetilisi väiteid, mille käigus need läbivad korduva kontrolli ning valideerimise (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006).

Esimese etapi (induktiivne kodeerimine) käigus kodeeriti kõik transkribeeritud intervjuud induktiivselt võimalikult transkribeeritud teksti lähedaselt ja selleks ei kasutatud eelnevaid teoreetilisi kontseptsioone (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). Sellele järgnes koodide esmane kategoriseerimine enne määratletud kategooriateta. Esimese etapi jooksul hakkasid ilmema erinevad koostööd iseloomustavad tähendused, teemad, suhted ja seosed.

Teises analüüsi etapis (kontseptuaalne määratlus) (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010) hinnati kriitiliselt kõiki empiirilisi väiteid ja mõisteid, mis ilmesid eelmises induktiivses kodeerimisetapis. Samuti võrreldi

teises analüüsietapis intervjuude ja fookusrühma andmeid uurimistöö käigus tehtud märkmetega.

Kolmandas musterkodeerimise etapis (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010) võrreldi tekkinud empiirilisi väiteid olemasolevate teoreetiliste kontseptsioonidega ja loodi uued vahekategooriad.

Selles etapis töötati välja erinevad põhiteemad ja kontseptsioonid, mis moodustasid I–III artikli tulemused.

Viimane analüüsietapp (teooria kondenseerumine) hõlmas uute teoreetiliste seisukohtade ning väidete empiirilise, teoreetilise ja sisemise kehtivuse kontrollimist ning uute ja olemasolevate teoreetiliste väidete omavahelist võrdlemist (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). Selles etapis toetuti kõige tähtsamatele turismikoostöö alastele teoreetilistele teadmistele, kontseptsioonidele, põhimõtetele ja aspektidele, millest koosneb töö arutelu osa.

Tulemused ja arutelu

Varasemast ajast (Czernek, 2013; Czernek-Marszalek, 2019) on teada, et postsovetlikus ühiskonnas soovib noorem põlvkond luua rohkem koostöösuhteid kui vanem põlvkond ja passiivsed ettevõtjad takistavad pikaajaliste koostöösuhete arengut, mis on kogukondade majanduslikuks kasuks vajalik. Eesti maapiirkondade turismiasjalised on oma sõprade või tuttavatega koostöösuhete loomisel väiksemas vormis avatumad kui võõrastega suuremates koostööprojektides. Koostöö võõrastega võib tekitada hirmu, et neilt võetakse ühistegevuse käigus midagi ära (I, II, III). Maapiirkonna turismikoostööd on suuremas piirkonnas (I) keeruline edendada, sest erinevad kogukonnad ei pruugi (I, III) identiteedi erinevuste (II) ja muude koostööd takistavate asjaolude tõttu (III) omavahel suhestuda. Maaturismialase koostöö olemuse mõtestamine nõuab laiemat piirkondlikku vaadet ning ka linna- ja maaturismiasjaliste vaheliste seoste tundmist. Sellel on eriliselt suur tähtsus siis, kui piirkondlikus turismistrateegias on tähelepanu all maa- ja linnaturismiasjaliste vaheline koostöö.

Pärnu regioonis mõjutab linnaturismivõrgustik piirkondlikku turismi palju rohkem kui maaturismivõrgustikud. Enamasti on linna- ja maaturismivõrgustike vaheline koostöö juhuslikku laadi.

Linnaturismiruumis paiknevad nii piirkondlikud võtmeturismiasjalised (peamiselt suured spaahotellid) kui ka väiksed turismiettevõtted, kes ise palju turundust ei tee ja pakuvad oma teenuseid hotellide klientidele. Selline olukord on loonud vastastikuse sõltuvussuhte, kus võtmeturismiasjalised on jõupositsioonil ja koostöö ei toimi usaldusel, vaid põhineb pigem tehingutel. Turismialane koostöö piirkondlikul tasandil toimub sõltumatuse ja vastastikuse sõltuvuse koostoimel, kus võimupositsioon asjaliste suhetes on üks põhielemente (I, II, III). Näiteks on Pärnu piirkonnas suurtel ja väikestel linnaturismiettevõtetel sõltuvussuhted, sest nad pakuvad oma teenuseid klientidele, kelle on piirkonda toonud suured ettevõtted. Samas ei põhine nende koostöösuhted usaldusel ja koostöö ei ole planeeritud (I). Suurtel linnaturismiettevõtetel on teistest ettevõtetest rohkem teavet ja seetõttu asetsevad nad teiste võrkude hulgas kesksel kohal ehk põhituru lähedal. Väikseid linnaettevõtteid mõjutab see olukord aga rohkem kui maaettevõtteid, sest teabe vahetamine nende ettevõtete vahel on vähene (I) ning nad sõltuvad suurte ettevõtete klientidest. Suured linnaettevõtted kujundavad kohalikku turismi rohkem kui väiksed ja maapiirkonna ettevõtted. Selle tulemusena on piirkonnas tugev spaa- ja rannapuhkuse kuvand. Kuna rannapuhkus toimub kõrghooajal (suvekuudel), on piirkonnas keeruline arendada hooajast sõltumatuid turismiteenuseid.

Pärnu regiooni maapiirkonnas keskenduvad turismiettevõtjad ise oma klientide leidmisele ning nende mitteametlikust koostööst ja ressursside ühendamisest on saanud igapäevane praktika. See võimaldab vähendada kulusid, pakkuda klientidele paremat teenust ja hoida külastajaid kauem paigal (I, III). Intervjueeritavad selgitasid, et piirkonnas on tugevaid maaturismivõrgustikke, tuues esile Kihnu saart ja Soomaa rahvusparki. Samuti leidub võrgustikke, mida haldavad kohalikud LEADERi tegevusrühmad, näiteks Romantiline Rannatee. Pärnu maapiirkonnas on turismivõrgustikke, milles koostöösuhted on tihedad, ja teisi, vähem tihedaid võrgustikke. Tulemused näitavad, et turismi kontekstis on kõige keerulisem turismi arendada hõredatel võrgustikel, nagu Romantiline Rannatee, sest selle liikmed asuvad sageli kaugel keskustest, kus toimuv sotsiaalne suhtlus on tähtis turismialase teabe omandamiseks ja jagamiseks. Samas on piirkonnas mitu tihedat maaturismi koostöövõrgustikku (Kihnu saar). Mõned neist on suuremad, aga sageli on nad ühe kogukonna põhised ja hõlmavad ainult väheseid asjalisi. Hõreda tihedusega maaeluvõrgustikes leiavad võrgustiku liikmed oma kliendid tavaliselt iseseisvalt, ilma võrgustiku abita, kuid

tulemused näitavad, et tihedates võrgustikes on klientide leidmine lihtsam. Maaturismivõrgustiku liikmetel on võrreldes linnavõrgustikuga sama suur omavaheline sõltuvus, aga liikmete omavahelised suhted põhinevad usaldusel ja siseinfo jagamisel, mistõttu on liikmetevahelised võimusuhted rohkem tasakaalus kui linnas (I). Piirkondlik põhisihtkoht võib olla linnapiirkond, kus asub piirkonna peamine turismiturg, kuid tulemused näitavad, et tegelikult on olukord palju keerulisem (I, III). Suures turismipiirkonnas võivad maapiirkonnad ja -võrgustikud olla ka kohalikud või isegi piirkondlikud põhisihthkohad (Kauppila et al., 2009) nagu Pärnu piirkonnas, kus tihedad maavõrgustikud on kohalikud põhisihthkohad. Samas on erinevatel tihedatel maaturismivõrgustikel oma klientuur, kes ei ole üldiselt huvitatud piirkonna teiste sihtkohtade külastamisest ja see pärsib erinevate piirkondlike võrgustike vahelist koostööd (I).

Tulemused näitavad, et ülitihedad turismivõrgustikud hakkavad varem või hiljem kasvama, mille tagajärjel nad stagneeruvad, sest kasvu järel võib sidusus kaduda. Selline arengustsenaarium juhtus Pärnu piirkonnas Romantilise Rannatee koostöövõrgustikuga (III). Brandão et al. (2019) juhivad tähelepanu sellele, et võrgustike mitmekesisus toob kaasa suurema innovatsiooni, kuid käesolev uuring näitab, et sellist eesmärki pole kerge saavutada. Siiski on olemas võimalus, kuidas edendada maapiirkondade ja linnavõrgustike koostööd. Mõned Pärnu piirkonna ettevõtjad, kes pakuvad oma teenuseid nii linna- kui ka maapiirkondade klientidele, kasutavad erinevate võrgustike pakutavaid hüvesid. Need ettevõtjad on hõivanud keskse positsiooni, mis muudab nad teistest ettevõtjatest edukamaks (Freeman, 1978), sest nad saavad koguda ja kasutada teavet ning muid hüvesid mõlemalt turult (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Samas ei too selline arengustsenaarium maapiirkondade ja linnade vahelise ühise võrgustiku kiireks tekkeks kiireid lahendusi, kuid selline areng võib olla teerajaja tulevikuks, sest linnapiirkonda külastavad turistid on üha enam huvitatud maaturismielamustest. Sellise arengustsenaariumi korral saavad maaturismiettevõtjad kasu stabiilsemast külastajatevoost ning nii maa- kui ka linnaturismi ettevõtjad saavad hoida külastajaid kauem piirkonnas, mis suurendab nende sissetulekuid ja loob senisest rikkalikuma külastuskogemuse. Selline areng on saavutatav ainult ühiste jõupingutustega, kus on ühendatud alt üles lähenemine ja ülalt alla turismi arendamine ning kaasatud on kõik kolm sektorit (I).

Sellise arengu saavutamiseks on vaja ühist koostööplatvormi ja sellist turismiorganisatsiooni, mis aitaks maa- ja linnaturismiasjalised kokku tuua ning omavahel koostööd tegema panna. Siinkohal on vajalik uue turismiorganisatsiooni teke, mis koondaks endas era-, avaliku ja kolmanda sektori huvid ning nii ülalt alla kui ka alt üles lähenemise. Näiteks Eesti maaturismis leiab sellise koostöö LEADERi tegevusrühmades, kuid maakesksuse tõttu ei sobi selline vorm linna ja maa koostöövõrgustike liitmiseks.

Turismialase koostöö arendamiseks on vajalik koostööplatvormi olemasolu. Turismi koostööplatvorm võib eksisteerida mitmel erineval kujul, näiteks virtuaalselt või füüsiliselt (kogukonnakeskus) või avalduda mingi organisatsioonilise tegevuse kaudu. Need elemendid võivad eksisteerida eraldi, osaliselt või koostoimes. Platvorm avaldub turismiasjaliste omavahelise suhtlemise kaudu. Koostööplatvorm seob turismiasjalised koostööga läbi omavahelise suhtluse, teadmiste jagamise ja vastastikku kasulike tegevuste. Koostööplatvormil toimub isiku ja teiste osaliste vaheline vastastikmõju, mis algatab ühise koostööidentiteedi loomise, kus identiteeti tajutakse isiklikul, inimestevahelisel ja rühma tasandil. Koostööplatvormil suhestub turismiasjaliste kollektiivne ja individuaalne identiteet, mille tulemusel luuakse ühine koostööidentiteet (II). Uurimispiirkondades tehakse koostööd peamiselt mitteametlikult väheste osalejate vahel, kellel on pidevalt muutuvad ja üksteisest sõltuvad suhted. Koostööplatvorm kujuneb välja erinevate formaalsete ja mitteformaalsete koostöötegevuste vastastikmõju kaudu, kuid väheste osalejatega koostöö ei loo alati platvormi, sest sellest koostööst ei teki uut väärtust. Sellistes tingimustes on koostöö teatud määral siiski võimalik, aga mitte kuigi jätkusuutlik, sest asjalistel on lihtsam oma eesmäärke saavutada ilma koostööta. Turismivõrgustike kontekstis on koostööplatvorm pidevalt arenev ja muutuv nähtus. Kui piirkondlik eesmärk on olemasolevate koostöövõrgustike ühendamine, peab turismiasjaliste sotsiaalne mina suhestuma erinevate asjaliste rühmadega laiemal piirkondlikul tasandil. Seda pole lihtne saavutada identiteedi erinevuste, organisatsioonilise killustatuse, erinevate eesmärkide, erineva tihedusega võrgustike, võimusuhte, võrgustike erineva keske positsiooni ja erinevate ettevõtluskeskkondade tõttu (I, II, III).

Kui ettevõtjad alustavad koostööga ja võrgustiku moodustamisega, hakkavad nad koostööd mõtestama ning ennast teistega siduma ehk looma jagatud koostööidentiteeti. Selle protsessi käigus seostub nende isiklik

identiteet teiste indiviidide identiteediga, mis hakkavad koos looma ühist kollektiivset identiteeti. Tulemused näitavad, et ühise koostööidentiteedi teket mõjutavad koha-, keskkonna-, ameti- ja kultuuriidentiteet. Kohaidentiteet määrab koostöö ulatuse. Koostöökeskkonnas, kus kohaidentiteet on väga tugev, võidakse väljaspool paikneajaid, kuid piirkonnas tegutsejaid tunnetada ohuna. Kohaidentiteedi erinev tunnetamine mitme turismipiirkonna mõjuväljas asuvatel äärealadel võib määrata, millise turismipiirkonnaga tahetakse ennast seostada. Samas võib see ka turismiasjalistes segadust tekitada, eriti kui turismipiirkonna piirid on hägused. Kui koostööpartnerid tunnetavad erinevalt kohaidentiteeti, siis võib olla pärsitud ühtse koostööplatvormi loomine (II).

Tulemused näitavad, et keskkonnaidentiteet võib olla mingis kindlas institutsionaalses ruumis väga tugev, näiteks rahvuspargis. Peale selle on keskkonnaidentiteet tunnetatav turismitegevuste kaudu, mis on seotud piirkonna loodusväärtustega. Rahvuspargis tugevdab avaliku organisatsiooni kaasamine koostöösse keskkonnaidentiteedi tajumist. Samas võib avaliku sektori osalemine aeglustada koostöö edendamist bürokraatia tõttu, mis omakorda mõjutab jagatud koostööidentiteedi tajumist (II).

Peale turismitegevuste on pea kõik intervjuueeritavad seotud veel teiste ametitega, enamasti avalikus või mittetulundussektoris. Seega on neil mitu ametiidentiteeti. Tulemustest saab järeldada, et ressurssidel (nt põllumajandus, metsandus või kalastamine) põhinev ametiidentiteet aitab turismi toetada. Turismiga tekib turg, mille kaudu saab külastajatele pakkuda ressurssidel põhinevaid tooteid. Samuti saab käsitöö, kohaliku toidu ja muude kultuuriväärtustega siduda kultuuri ja ametiidentiteedi ning arendada sellega turismi. Samas võib see ka olla turismikoostööd takistav aspekt. Kui isikul on tugev turismist eristuv ametiidentiteet ja turismiga tegeletakse hooajaliselt, siis ei keskenduta tavaliselt nii palju turismile, et oleks vaja teistega koostööd teha. See aga võib omakorda pärssida kogukondlikku turismi arendamist. Turismiasjalised võivad tunnetada koostöös kultuuriidentiteeti erinevalt. Samas võivad nad ikkagi koostööd teha, aga kui turismi arendamine ületab nende sallivuse piiri, siis võivad koostöösuhted lõppeda (II).

Kollektiivsed eesmärgid on paremini saavutatavad, kui sõbrad või tuttavad teevad omavahel koostööd ja jagatakse ühiseid väärtusi. Ühiselt jagatud identiteet võimaldab asjalistel suhestuda teiste inimeste

ja rühmadega, mõtestada koostööd, enda osa koostöövõrgustikus ning mingisse kindlasse inimrühma kuulumist. Tulemustest selgub tavaline muster, et koostöö käigus areneb tuttavate ja sõprade vaheline koostöö ning sinna lisandub üha uusi inimesi. Kuid siin võib peituda oht, et kui selle arengu käigus ei samastata ennast koostööga, siis hakatakse otsima alternatiivseid lahendusi, millega suudetakse samastuda (II, III).

Jagatud koostööidentiteet luuakse ühiselt koostööplatvormil, mis algatab individuaalse ja kollektiivse identiteedi koostoime, raamistab koostöö, loob koostöoks sobiva keskkonna, hõlbustab ühise koostööidentiteedi loomise protsessi ning aitab hoida kaasatud osalisi koostöös (II).

III artikkel keskendub ühe konkreetse maaturismi koostöövõrgustiku (Romantiline Rannatee Pärnumaal) arengu selgitamisele elutsükli kontekstis. Tulemused näitavad, et turismialane koostöö võib korraga areneda ametlikul ja mitteametlikul ajajoonel, kus üks ajajoon täiendab teist. Romantilise Rannatee puhul aitasid enne ametliku koostöö algust eksisteeriv vastastikusel usaldusel põhinev mitteametlik koostöö, professionaalne juhtimine, kohalike turismiasjaliste suur huvi ja sotsiaalse kapitali suurendamine algatada kiire ametliku koostöö stardifaasi. Selles faasis arendati koostööd ühiste töötubade, õppereiside ja festivalivõrgustiku kaudu. Kahe projektiliidri pideva eestvedamise ja ELi rahaliste vahendite toel jõudis ametlik koostöövõrgustik kasvufaasi. Koostöös osalejad nimetasid seda võrgustikku sotsiaalseks liikumiseks, milles ettevõtjatel oli palju võimalusi oma ettevõtluse ja sotsiaalsete eesmärkide saavutamiseks (III).

Vaatamata edule jäid mõned mõjuvõimsad asjalised turismi arendamise osas skeptiliseks ja koostöö eestvedajad lahkusid võimuvõitluse tõttu. Selline areng ja asjaolu, et koostöö oli paisunud liiga suureks, ähmastusid algsed eesmärgid ja aeglustusid ühised tegevused, mis viisid koostöö stagnatsioonifaasi. Romantilise Rannatee juhtum näitab, et koostöö hakkab stagneeruma siis, kui seda juhivad üksikud liidrid toetava meeskonnata, koostööst saadavat kasu ja tulemusi ei mõõdetata, koostöö arendamine on tugevalt seotud Euroopa Liidu rahastusega, omatulu ei teki, partneritel ei ole piisavalt aega panustada vabatahtlikesse koostööüritustesse ja hõreda koostöövõrgustiku tõttu on häiritud asjaliste omavaheline suhtlus. Ametlik koostöö jätkus ka stagnatsiooniperioodil, kuid sellel pole enam sellist mõju kui algfaasis. Romantilise Rannatee tähtsamad saavutused avalduvad tugeva mitteametliku koostöövõrgustiku, elujõuliste kohalike

festivalide ja muude ürituste näol, kuid neil puudub tugev Romantilise Rannatee identiteet, mis oli üks algse koostöö eesmäärke. Romantilise Rannatee võrgustik küll eksisteerib, kuid algse tugevusega. Selline areng näitab, et ametlik ja mitteametlik koostöö võivad teineteist täiendada. Sellel juhul aitas ametlik koostöö mitteametlikku koostööd tugevdada ja selle näite põhjal võib öelda, et korraga võivad koostöö aeglustusfaasis rakenduda erinevad jätkustsenaariumid (III).

Turismi elutsükli mudel näitab, et koostöö areneb tsükliliselt (Caffyn, 2000). Selle uurimistöö märkimisväärne täiendus turismialase koostöö mõistmiseks on see, et koostöö võib areneda ka ringikujulise stsenaariumi järgi, eriti kui koostöö järgib ametlikku ja mitteametlikku elukaart. Romantilise Rannatee koostöövõrgustik liitis omavahel teatud ajaks mitteametlikud võrgustikud ja moodustas suure ametliku võrgustiku. Kui laialdane ametlik koostöö stagneerus, väljusid varasemad mitteametlikud koostöövõrgustikud ametlikust koostöövõrgustikust suurema võimsuse, sotsiaalse kapitali, teadmiste ja ressursidega kui enne ametliku koostöö algust. See näitab, et kui laialdane ametlik koostöö täidab oma eesmärgid või aeglustub muudel põhjustel, siis mõne aja pärast võib mitteametliku koostöö pinnalt tekkida uus koostöö, mis hakkab asjalistele uusi hüvesid pakkuma (III). Samas võib ümbritsev institutsiooniline keskkond ametliku koostöö arendamist toetada või takistada. Näiteks lõi ELiga ühinemine soodsad tingimused ametliku koostöö alustamiseks (I, III) aga uuringus osalejad pidasid koostöö arendamisel omavalitsusreformi negatiivseks mõjutajaks, sest see vähendas kuuluvustunnet (II, III). Eelnevast järeldub, et mitteametliku koostöö põhielemendid, nagu isiklikud suhted, sotsiaalne kapital ja usaldus, on maapiirkondades stabiilsemad kui koostöö ümbritseva institutsionaalse keskkonnaga. Ressursid, nagu kogukonna liikmed, sotsiaalne kapital, kohalik loodus- ja kultuurikeskkond ning identiteet, moodustavad koostöö tuumiku. Mitteametlikku koostöötuuma ümbritseb institutsionaalne keskkond, mis võib ressursse tugevdada või nõrgendada. Eespool nimetatud põhielemendid mõjutavad omakorda ametliku koostöökeskkonna stabiilsust ja edukust. Kuid isegi sobiva keskkonna olemasolul mõjutavad ametlikku koostööd poliitilised ja institutsionaalsed muudatused koostöökeskkonna ümber. Eduka turismi eestvedamise korral saab sisemisi ja välimisi elemente kasutada mitteametliku koostöö edendamiseks ning tuuma sees olevatele sisemistele ressurssidele suurema võimsuse andmiseks. Kui ametliku koostöö ühised eesmärgid on täidetud ja ümbritsevas keskkonnas toimuvad uued institutsionaalsed

muudatused, hakkab ametlik koostöö stagneeruma ega lisa enam tuuma sees olevatele mitteametlikele koostööressurssidele mingit uut väärtust. Institutsionaalse olukorra muutumisel võib tekkida uus ametlik koostöö, mis sulgeb koostööringi pärast mida alustab ring uut tsüklit (III).

Kokkuvõte

Maaturismi koostöö olemuse selgitamiseks on vajalik laiem piirkondlik ja kitsam võrguspetsiifiline lähenemine (I, III). Laiemal piirkondlikul tasandil jaguneb turism linna ja maa koostööruumideks. Need ruumid erinevad peamiselt (1) ettevõtluskeskkonna, (2) olemasolevate võrgustike, (3) avaliku sektori toe ja (4) külastajate poolest (I).

Laiem piirkondlik turismikoostöövõrgustik on sageli vajalik, et tagada kohalike strateegiliste eesmärkide täitmine, tugevdada turismipiirkonna konkurentsivõimet ning suurendada kohalike turismiettevõtjate võimekust ja kasu. Turismikoostöö võrgustikud võivad olla tihedad, kus asjalised on üksteisega lähestikku seotud, ja hõredad, kus ettevõtjate vahel on distants. Kui tihedad ja hõredad võrgustikud loovad ühise koostöövõrgustiku, siis võib see luua turismipiirkonnas erinevaid innovaatilisi ideid turismi arendamiseks (I). Samas on sellise võrgustiku loomine keeruline, sest turismis määrab jagatud koostööidentiteet koostöö ulatuse, kus võõraid koostööga haakujaid võidakse mitte usaldada (II). Laiema koostöövõrgustiku teket takistavad ka segased eesmärgid, füüsiline, sotsiaalne, suhtlemis- ja identiteedidistants ning tugevad sidemed ühe kogukonna liikmete vahel ei pruugi tingimata luua tugevaid sidemeid teiste piirkonnas asuvate kogukondadega. Turismiasjaliste distantseerumine teistest asjalistest tekitab hirmu, et midagi kollektiivselt koostöös loodut lügab võõraste kätte (I).

Maa- ja linnapiirkonna ühise koostöövõrgustiku loomiseks on vaja võimekat esindajat, kes sobiks mõlemale asjaliste rühmale ning oleks suuteline neid ühendama. Selline esindaja peaks olema võimeline ära kasutama potentsiaalset nõrkade ja tugevate koostöösidemete koostoimest saadavat kasu ühise võrgustiku loomisel (I).

Jagatud koostööidentiteet, mis koosneb koha-, töö-, keskkonna- ja kultuuriidentiteedist, aitab edendada koostööd nii väiksemate kui ka suuremate võrgustike juures. Jagatud koostööidentiteet luuakse koostööplatvormil, millel ühinevad individuaalne ja kollektiivne

identiteet. Koostööplatvorm on eriti tähtis juhul, kui koostööprotsess areneb usaldusel põhinevast isikutevahelisest koostöösuhtest erinevate rühmade vaheliseks koostööks. Sellise stsenaariumi puhul võivad asjalised tajuda ohtu oma isiklikule identiteedile, mis ei taga koostöö jätkusuutlikkust. Seega, edukas koostööplatvorm aitab kollektiivselt jagada koostööidentiteeti, hoiab koostöös turismiasjalisi, mõjutab koostöö tulemuslikkust, pakub sidusrühmadele suhtlemist ja suurendab või nõrgendab arusaamu jagatud koostööidentiteedist. Koostööidentiteedita koostöösuhted on olemuselt pigem tehingupõhised, kus asjaliste vahel ei looda uut väärtust. Kui jagatud koostööidentiteedi loomist koostööprotsessis ei toimu või ei haaku see asjaliste enda identiteediga, siis hakkavad asjalised otsima alternatiivseid koostöövõimalusi. (II).

Postsovetlikus turismipiirkonnas paiknev koostöövõrgustik võib korrigeerida ametlikku ja mitteametlikku ajaskaalat, kus koostöö areng järgib ringikujulist elutsükli. Selle elutsükli käigus mõjutavad koostöö jätkusuutlikkust kõik elutsükli etapid, samuti sisemised ja välimised aspektid. Sellises koostööprotsessis toetavad ametlik ja mitteametlik koostöö teineteist, milles ametlik koostöö tugevdab mitteametlikku koostööd. Kui ametlik koostöö on oma eesmärgid täitnud või tema areng on aeglustunud, siis on piirkondliku koostöö viimiseks uuele tasandile vaja uut ametlikku koostööd.

Koostöövõrgustiku jätkusuutlikkus on haavatavam, kui selle juhtimine tugineb paarile tugimeeskonnata liidriks, eesmärgid on segased, tulemusi ei mõodeta, tekivad suhtlusprobleemid, asjalistel ei ole aega vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemiseks, rahastamine on ebakindel, institutsioonilised ümberkorraldused muudavad maapiirkonna elu ebastabiilseks ja võrgustikul puudub koostöö linnakeskusega. Edukas maaturismialane koostöö ei piirdu ainult rahalise kasuga, vaid aitab kogukonna liikmetel omavahel suhelda, annab kohalikele elanikele kodukoha- ja kuuluvustunde, pakub meelelahutust ning paneb maapiirkondade elanikud tundma end kasulike ja vajalike (III).

I artikkel panustab teadusse uute teadmistega võrgustike toimimise kohta, mis näitab, et maa- ja linnaturismivõrgustikud võivad piirkondlikul tasandil niivõrd palju erineda, et nende ühendamine strateegilise eesmärgi saavutamiseks võib osutuda senistes tingimustes peaaegu võimatuks. Varasemast on teada, et tihedad ja hõredad võrgustikud võivad üksteist täiendada, luues ühist kasu kummagi võrgustiku liikmetele. Sellist

arengut on võimalik saavutada ainult piirkondliku turismijuhtimise ümberkorraldamisega. Kõik piirkonna tihedad turismivõrgustikud võivad olla piirkondlikult kesksel kohal, kui neil on oma kliendid. See muudab keeruliseks turismipiirkonna keskpunkti leidmise erinevate võrkude ühendamiseks.

Varasemast turismialasest teaduskirjandusest ei ole selgunud, kuidas on individuaalsed identiteedid seotud ühise koostööidentiteediga koostööplatvormil ja mis loob jagatud koostööidentiteedi. II artikkel annab väärtusliku panuse turismikirjandusse, rõhutades, et identiteet raamistab turismikoostöö ulatuse ja määrab selle piirid, võib olla erinevate asjaliste ühendaja või eraldaja ning annab võimaluse arendada jätkusuutlikku koostööd.

Varem oli teada, et turismikoostöö elutsükel põhineb erinevatel etappidel, järgib ühte ajaskaalat, sellel on tavaliselt pärast aeglustumisfaasi läbimist üks jätkustsenaarium ja see järgib tsüklilist arengumustrit. Kuid nagu näitab III artikkel, on tsüklilise turismikoostöö kõrval ka teisi arengustsenaariume. Koostöö võib areneda ka ringikujulise elutsükli kaudu, areneda mitmel ajajoonel ja sellel võib olla erinevaid üheaegseid jätkustsenaariume.

Eelneva kokkuvõtteks saab selle uuringu põhjal väita, et postsovetlik keskkond on tuntavalt mõjutanud turismiasjaliste koostööd. Suured institutsioonilised muudatused on pakkunud mitmeid võimalusi, kuid on ka takistanud turismialase koostöö arengut. Turismikoostöö sellises keskkonnas on killustatud, mitteametlik, sellel puudub selge juhtimisstruktuur, vastutus juhtimise eest on jagatud mitme organisatsiooni vahel ning katsed laiendada olemasolevat mitteametlikku koostööd ja anda neile rohkem rohujuure tasandilt algavat jõudu on piiratud. Põhjusi, miks postsovetlikus keskkonnas on turismikoostööd keeruline edendada, võib leida nii riigi, piirkondlikul kui ka kogukonna tasandil. Riigi tasandil on turismi arendamine jagatud erinevate organisatsioonide vahel ja nii on jagatud ka vastutus. Jagatud vastutuse korral on juhtimisülesanded süiski nõrgalt ellu viidud. Riigi tasandil on Eesti turismi turundamiseks üleilmsel turismiturul kasutatud palju ressursse, kuid ühtsuse saavutamine turismialases koostöös on jäänud tagaplaanile. Piirkondlikul tasandil on erinevad sihtkohad ja nendes sihtkohtades olevad turismivõrgustikud on killustatud ega moodusta piirkondlikku tervikut. Suur vastutus turismi arendamise

eest turismipiirkonnas lasub erinevatel katuseorganisatsioonidel ja muude kitsa fookusega kohalike algatuste õlul ning seetõttu on tekkinud arvukalt väikseid mitteametlikke turismivõrgustikke, mille omavahelised sidemed on nõrgad. On üsna tavaline, et riigi ja piirkondliku tasandi turismistrateegias on peamine tähelepanu külastajate arvu kasvul ja turundusel, kuid sisemiste turismielementide ja asjaliste integreerimine üheks tervikuks on jäetud tagaplaanile. Käesolevas uuringus tuuakse välja, et turismikoostöös on tähtsaid elemente, näiteks identiteet, mis võib sidusrühmi köita, aga ka üksteisest eemale tõrjuda. Sellest lähtuvalt peaks eduka turismistrateegia esimene eesmärk kõigepealt keskenduma aspektidele, mis aitavad moodustada koostööplatvormi, mille algatab juhtorganisatsioon, mida kõik koostööst huvitatud osalised aktsepteerivad. Selline arengustsenaarium aitab luua turismipiirkonnas ühtsust, mille abil saavutatakse konkurentsieelis ja turismielamuste parem kvaliteet ning äratatakse huvi uute külastajate sihtrühmade vastu nii välismaal kui ka Eestis. Varasemates uuringutes on rõhutatud, et detsentraliseerimine võib aidata erinevaid sidusrühmi kokku viia. Käesolev uuring aga juhib tähelepanu sellele, et ühised eesmärgid on saavutatavad alles siis, kui koostööplatvormil on ühendatud alt üles algatuste ja ülalt alla turismi juhtimine. Mitteametlikul turismialasel koostööl on selged piirid ja seda mõjutab ümbritsev institutsionaalne keskkond. Eelnevates uuringutes on välja toodud, et formaalsus võib aidata teha koostööd jätkusuutlikumaks. See uuring leidis, et maaturismi ettevõtjate koostöö ei lõpe kunagi täielikult, vaid see liigub ühest olekust teise. Kuid seda koostööd saab tugevdada ja muuta jätkusuutlikumaks, kui kasutada õigesti hüvesid, mida pakub laiem piirkondlik koostöö ja ümbritsev institutsionaalne keskkond. Seda on võimalik saavutada pädeva ja kõiki osalisi ühendava turismiorganisatsiooni abil. Kui selline areng on saavutatud, võib see suurendada asjalistevahelist usaldust ja sotsiaalset kapitali, vähendada hirmu, et koostöö tulemusel loodu satub valedesse kättesse, et koostööst saadud kasu jagatakse ebaõiglaselt ning vähendada skeptilisi hoiakuid, et turism pole tähtis valdkond, mis ei vääri arendamist.

Järeldused

Teoreetilised järeldused

- Käesolev uuring lisab turismiteadusele mitu uut vaatenurka, mis aitavad mõista koostööd turismi kontekstis. Esiteks on suures maa-

ja linnaturismiasjalistest koosnevas postsovetlikus turismipiirkonnas võimusuhted erinevate võrgustike vahel nii keerulised, et ühelgi osalisel pole jõudu erinevaid piirkondlikke võrgustikke omavahel ühendada.

- Teine uuringust selgunud aspekt näitab, et tihedaid turismivõrgustikke ei saa lihtsalt ühendada hõredate võrgustikega. Selline areng viib tihedate turismivõrgustike stagnatsioonini ja hoolimata asjaolust, et väikse tihedusega võrgustike liikmed ei saa võrgustikus palju toetust, võivad selliste võrgustike liikmed olla turumuudatustele vastupidavamad. Samas on võrgustiku toetuse puudumise tõttu nende areng ja kasv siiski piiratud.
- Erinevate piirkondlike turismivõrgustike ühendamiseks on vaja koostööplatvormi. Sellisel platvormil peab olema keskne positsioon maa- ja linnaturismivõrgustike vahel, nii et kaetud oleksid mõlemad võrgustikud.
- Kahjuksonseniturismialasesteaduskirjandusesidentiteediküsimustele väga vähe tähelepanu pööratud. Kui jagatud koostööidentiteet saavutatakse nii, et see hõlmab koostöös osalejate individuaalseid identiteete, saab koostöö koostööplatvormil areneda. See peaks olema kõigi asjaliste rühmade aktsepteeritud turismiorganisatsiooni ülesanne. Kui sellist olukorda ei saavutata, ei hakka erinevad asjaliste rühmad omavahel kunagi jätkusuutlikku koostööd tegema.
- Maaturismis, kus ressursse on vähe ja asjalised on üksteisest sõltuvad, areneb koostöö pidevalt, kuid see ei kao kunagi täielikult. Sellises keskkonnas areneb koostöö ühest vormist teise, olles sõltumatuse ja vastastikuse sõltuvuse ning formaalse ja mitteformaalse oleku vastastikmõjus.

Praktilised järeldused

- Kohalikel turismi eestvedajatel, juhtidel ja poliitikakujundajatel kogukonna, piirkondlikul ja riiklikul tasandil on selle uurimistöö põhjal suunis, et eduka koostöö jaoks on vaja keskenduda ühise koostööidentiteedi loomisele. Selleks on vaja asjalised kaardistada, mis peab sisaldama mitte ainult asjaliste ettevõtlusalaseid eesmärke, vaid ka väärtusi ja suhteid kohaliku paiga, keskkonna ning kultuuriga.

Praegu keskenduvad kohalikud turismistrateegiad peamiselt ettevõtlusega seotud aspektidele, kuid eduka koostöö saavutamiseks peavad ka sotsiaalsed aspektid olema rohkem esiplaanil.

- Käesolev uuring näitab, et olemasolevad turismiorganisatsioonid ei ole võimelised täitma piirkondlikku strateegilist eesmärki maa- ja linnavõrgustike üksteisele lähendamisel ning vaja on uut lähenemist. Selline organisatsioon ei peaks mitte ainult esindama maa- ja linnapiirkonda, vaid koosnema ka mõlema piirkonna eripärasid tundvatest spetsialistidest. Sellise strateegilise eesmärgi täitmiseks peab olema selge, mis on iga asjalise konkreetse ülesanded. Selline lähenemine aitab saavutada koostööplatvormi, kus eksisteerivad ülalt alla ja alt üles lähenemisviisid. Aastakümneid turismiga seotud ülesannete jagamine erinevate institutsioonide ja organisatsioonide vahel (riiklikul ja piirkondlikul tasandil) näitab, et jagatud vastutus ei ole ennast tõestanud ning turismikorraldus riigi ja piirkondlikul tasandil on Eestis nõrk.
- Eestis on üsna tavaline, et koostööd juhib üks või paar kohalikku liidrit ja neil puudub toetav meeskond. Meeskonna arendamine on eduka koostöö jaoks väga tähtis aspekt. See aitab suurendada osalejate teadlikkust koostööst ja kaasata rohkem inimesi, millega on võimalik välja töötada edukas koostööplatvorm.
- Senisest suurem tehnoloogiliste lahenduste kaasamine võib aidata pakkuda turismialaseks koostööks uusi innovaatilisi suhtlus- ja teabevahetusvõimalusi ning ühendada ettevõtjaid. See võib olla lahendus, kuidas siduda hõredate võrgustike liikmetest ettevõtjaid senisest paremini piirkondlike sotsiaalsete ringkondadega.
- Tehnoloogia võib aidata ka külastajaid ettevõtjatele lähemale tuua. See võib olla kasulik uute investeerimisvõimaluste leidmiseks. Näiteks võib ühisrahastus olla lahendus, kuidas sõltuda vähem Euroopa Liidu rahastusest. Osaliselt infotehnoloogial põhinev koostööplatvorm aitab külastajaid koostöös olevate ettevõtjatega paremini liita.
- Põlvkondadevaheline koostööõpe on üks võimalus koostöö arendamiseks. Peale on kasvamas uus maaturismi ettevõtjate põlvkond, kellel pole vanema põlvkonnaga häid ühendavaid sidemeid. Põlvkondadevaheline õppimine võib aga olla mõlemale

asjaliste rühmale vastastikku kasulik ja selle tulemusena võib leida uusi lahendusi, kuidas ületada hooajalisust ning muid katsumusi.

Tulevased uuringud

- Üks tulevaste koostööuuringute suund võiks keskenduda piirkondliku turismivõrgustiku ajaliselt pikemale koostööprotsessile. Näiteks kui piirkonna turismiarengu strateegiline eesmärk on maa- ja linnaturismivõrgustiku ühendamine, siis võib juhtuda, et maa- ja linnavõrgustiku ühendamiseks ei ole piisavalt ühenduslülisid. Selle põhjuseks võib olla see, et erinevad piirkondlikud võrgustikud on erinevates elutsükli faasides. Tulevased uuringud võiksid keskenduda erinevatele piirkondlikele võrkudele ja analüüsida, kuidas mõjutavad erinevad elutsükli faasid maa- ja linnaturismi koostööd. Kvantitatiivne võrgustiku analüüs võib olla kasulik erinevate piirkondlike võrgustikevaheliste sidemete tugevuse mõõtmiseks ja selle kaudu võib ilmneda rohkem aspekte, mis mõjutavad piirkondlikke koostöösuhteid.
- See teadustöö näitas turismikoostöö võrgustike keerulist olemust. See näitab, et koostöö tegemisel on tähtis õppeprotsess. Tulevased uuringud peaksid keskenduma turismialase koostöö õppimisele ja õppeprotsessi juhtimisele ning sellele, keda peaks sellesse kaasama.
- Selle teadustöö üks osa keskendus jagatud koostööidentiteedi loomisele ebastabiilses postsovetlikus turismikeskkonnas. Sarnane uuring stabiilsemas turismikeskkonnas võib lisada rohkem teadmisi selle kohta, kuidas luuakse ühine koostööidentiteet.
- Kuna uuringus osalejad olid peamiselt naised, võib üks uuringusuund keskenduda turismialases koostöös soolise võrdõiguslikkuse küsimustele. Näiteks, mis on koostöökeskkonnas naistele omane ja millised suhted tekivad koostööd tegevate naiste vahel?
- Kuna see uuring viidi läbi postsovetlikus keskkonnas, saab tulevases turismikoostöö uuringus keskenduda sellele, kuidas erineb noorema põlvkonna ettevõtjate koostöö vanemate ettevõtjate omast. Kas postsovetlik keskkond mõjutab ka neid või on see ainult vanema põlvkonna omapära?

Piirangud

- I artikkel. Käesolev artikkel keskendus ühele kindlale postsovetlikule turismipiirkonnale ning kuna turismipiirkonnad erinevad oma kultuuri, ajaloo ja geograafia poolest, ei saa selle uuringu tulemusi üle kanda teistele keskkondadele. Hoolimata põhjalikust analüüsist võib olla vajalik lisauuringute tegemine, sest koostöö ja võrgustike loomine areneb ja muutub pidevalt. Selle tulemusel võivad ilmnedä uued vaatenurgad maa- ja linnapiirkondade ning koostöövõrgustike mõistmisel ja asjalistevaheliste sidemete ning suhete kujunemisel. Teised metodoloogilised lähenemisviisid samas uurimiskeskkonnas võivad lisada uusi teadmisi ja aspekte, mis puudutavad maapiirkondade ja turismivõrgustike loomist piirkondlikul tasandil.
- II artikkel. See uuring keskendus sellele, kuidas töö-, koha-, keskkonna- ja kultuurilised identiteedid on jagatud koostööidentiteedi osa. Kuid ka teised identiteedid (nt sugu, religioon või rass) võivad mõjutada jagatud koostööidentiteedi loomist.
- III artikkel. Selle uuringu aluseks on üks maaturismi koostööstsenaarium postsovetlikus turismikeskkonnas. Rohkem uuringuid erinevates keskkondades võib aidata luua üldisema teooria koostöö elutsükli ja jätkustsenaariumite võimaluste kohta. Turismipartnerluse elutsükli mudeli katsetamine erinevates keskkondades võib avada uusi vaatenurki, mis võivad näidata, kuidas koostöö elutsükli kontekstis areneb ja milliseid alternatiivseid koostöö jätkustsenaariume eksisteerib.

Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, & M., Viira, A. H. (2021). Diverse networks in regional tourism: rural and urban collaboration perspective. *European Journal of Tourism Research*.

Diverse networks in regional tourism: rural and urban collaboration perspective

Pilving, T^{ab*}, Kull, T^b, Suškevics, M^b, Viira, A, H^a.

^a The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Estonia, Tartu, Kreutzwaldi 1a, 51006, tarmo.pilving@emu.ee, phone: +37256602911, fax: +372731 3300, ants-hannes.viira@emu.ee

^bInstitute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Kreutzwaldi 1a, Tartu, Estonia, 51006, , tiit.kull@emu.ee, monika.suskevics@emu.ee

Abstract

This study investigates the collaborative ties between rural and urban tourism enterprises and their networks in the post-communist Pärnu region of Estonia. For that, two research questions were answered: what is the nature of collaborative ties between entrepreneurs and sub-networks in a tourist region and how different ties between regional tourism networks foster and hinder the development process of rural-urban tourism network? This study bases on stakeholder theory, actor-network theory, social network analysis, and social network theory, uses multi-grounded theory as a methodology, and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with the regional tourism actors.

Results indicate mutually beneficial relationships between prominent and small urban enterprises. Prominent urban enterprises gain by services offered by small enterprises, the latter benefit by the visitors brought in the town by the big ones. Regular collaboration is a common practice among rural enterprises. However, a collaboration between rural and urban entrepreneurs and networks at the regional level is minimal. However, some collaborative ties between tourism enterprises in a regional network exist between urban and rural entrepreneurs in different collaboration levels. The urban tourism network influences regional tourism much more than rural networks does.

Keywords: rural-urban tourism networking; multi-grounded theory; social network theory; social network analysis; stakeholder theory; actor network theory; Pärnu region in Estonia

* corresponding author

1. Introduction

In tourism, collaboration networks help to allocate resources, offer engaging experiences to visitors, and increase entrepreneurs' resilience to shocks (Jesus & Franco, 2016; Luthe & Wyss, 2014; Pechlaner & Volgger, 2012; Van der Zee et al., 2017). According to Wood and Gray (1991, p. 146), "Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain".

A tourism network is a complex system where nodes (e.g., organisations, groups, and individuals) and ties (e.g., communication, agreements, and relationships) (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) form a system in which different entrepreneurs, through their position, decisions, behaviour, or attitudes, affect each other and the whole network (Fyall et al., 2012; Wellman, 1988). Networking affects several complex processes: operation of value chains, governance, downscaling, outsourcing, and production chains (Porter, 1990). During the networking process, network members work together to achieve a collective aim but maintain control over their individual resources (Baggio et al., 2010a).

Large tourist regions usually comprise both, rural and urban settlements. Regionwide rural and urban networking helps to share knowledge, resources and information to fulfil strategic aims that are unreachable to single entrepreneurs (Beritelli, 2011) or small networks, alleviate fragmentation and geographical spread problems in tourism (Scott et al., 2008) and improve competitiveness in the global tourism market and attract potential investors (Tremblay, 1998). The tourist region can benefit from networking via economic growth and social benefits to local communities (Novelli et al., 2006). However, collaboration networks between tourism entrepreneurs often occur in small and local formations characterised by frequent socialisation and a high level of mutual trust. Mutually beneficial tourism collaboration is problematic even in small networks as tourism entrepreneurs that occasionally collaborate are simultaneously competing with each other (Van der Zee et al., 2017).

While regional collaborative networking is necessary to achieve strategic aims in the tourist regions, it is a challenge to launch and sustain a collaboration network (Saxena et al., 2007). Rural and urban entrepreneurs operate their business and socialise in different environments. Urban tourism typically has a larger scale, and it involves both large- and small-scale enterprises. Concurrently, rural tourism entrepreneurs often are small family-owned or lifestyle enterprises, which have strong ties within local communities (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016; Dimitrovski et al., 2012). Relationships between entrepreneurs play a central role in

networks (Jesus & Franco, 2012; Timur & Getz, 2008) and determine the success of the collaboration (Raab & Kenis, 2009). Large tourism enterprises typically establish formalised relationships (Czernek et al., 2017), while a trust-based informal collaboration is usually present between small tourism enterprises (Pilving et al., 2019). In some (post-communist) countries, low trust in society complicates the formation of tourism collaboration networks (Bjørnskov, 2007). In this setting, lack of a collaborative experience and tradition may hinder networking (Czernek, 2013).

Studies on networks in tourism have used different theoretical approaches. According to Nguyen et al. (2019), stakeholder theory (ST), actor-network theory (ANT), and social network analysis (SNA) are the most widely used approaches in the tourism networks research. ST contends that the success of a tourist destination and entrepreneurs' involvement in tourism networks are mutually dependent. Entrepreneurs have different levels of salience (Mitchell et al., 1997), and the tourist destination management must understand and address their interests (Freeman, 1984; Jones & Wicks, 1999; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). However, ST does not focus on the interconnections and relationships between entrepreneurs and sub-networks (Beritelli, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2019). According to ANT, networks are heterogeneous and typically formed by a principal actor who activates others (Dedeke, 2017; Ren, 2010). ANT focuses on the mutual influences between actor groups and allows exploring problem identification and goal setting (Vicsek et al., 2016). However, the use of ANT in network research is subject to limitations. The actor-network is constantly changing, generating the risk of endless chains of associations (Nguyen et al., 2019). Several studies (e.g., Baggio et al., 2010b; Dredge, 2006; Hristov et al., 2018; Tinsley & Lynch, 2001) use SNA, "a strategy for investigating social structures" (Otte & Rousseau, 2002, p. 441) to explain how actors share information in the network via direct and indirect links. However, SNA has limitations in explaining the processes and dynamics inside the network (Albrecht, 2013) and disregards the role of the individual influences on the network if used quantitatively (Ahrens, 2018).

Social network theory (SNT) addresses the limitation of ST by identifying different actors and by explaining the nature of ties within a network (Granovetter, 1985). Jesus and Franco (2016) used SNT to study regional rural-urban tourism cooperation networks between hotels in the inland regions of Portugal, focusing on cooperation habits, the structure of relationships, and entrepreneurs' perception on the role of network structures. However, there is a gap in academic literature related to problems of the development of regional collaboration network between urban and rural tourism enterprises.

To address this gap, the study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) what is the nature of collaborative ties between entrepreneurs and sub-networks in a tourist region; (2) how different ties between regional tourism networks foster and hinder the development process of rural-urban tourism network?

Because of the complexity of the development of networks in rural and urban tourism, this study employs key principles of ST, ANT, SNA and SNT. To avoid limiting the study in the early research stages with a too narrow theoretical frame, an in-depth qualitative approach based on the multi-grounded theory (MGT) is applied. MGT allows developing or complementing a theory using empirical data. The use of MGT includes inductivism and deductivism and theoretical, empirical, and internal grounding without allowing the existing theory to limit the use of the data (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). Therefore, this approach is particularly suitable for addressing complex networking phenomena.

The research was carried out, and data were collected using semi-structured interviews with local tourism stakeholders in the Pärnu region of post-communist Estonia. In the region, stakeholders in tourism networks can belong to different (private, public and non-profit) sectors. However, this study focuses on networking between entrepreneurs from the private sector. Pärnu town and surrounding rural area are situated in western Estonia. Its neighbours are Rapla County in the north, Lääne County in the north-west, Viljandi County in the northeast, and Saare County in the west. The southern area of the county neighbours the Republic of Latvia. Pärnu area consists of seven municipalities from which Läänemaa, Põhja-Pärnumaa, Tori, Saarde, Häädemeeste and Kihnu are rural, and Pärnu town is an urban municipality (Local Authorities of Pärnu County, 2020). The area has a population of 86,165 (2020) residents (Pärnu maakond, 2020). More than half of the residents live in the Pärnu town and others in the smaller establishments such as villages (over 200 villages in the Pärnu County) (Local Authorities of Pärnu County, 2020).

In terms of area, the Pärnu county is one of the largest in Estonia with 5419 km², of which islands and islets cover 23 km². Islands of Kihnu (17.1 km²) and Manija (2.1 km²) are inhabited. The length of the county coastline is 635 km. The strategy of the Pärnu county highlights as the strengths of the region a strong regional centre (Pärnu town), and reputable resort and recreation industry. The weaknesses of the region include population decline and ageing, and the inability of Pärnu town to sufficiently fulfil the role of the regional development centre (Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2035+, 2018). This region was selected for the study because tourism in this region has been for a long time concentrated in Pärnu town. Rural tourism started to foster in the region in the early 2000s when Estonia became a

member of the European Union. The region hosts different rural and urban tourism networks and strategic aim of local tourism policy is to foster networking between them (Development Strategy of Pärnumaa 2030+, 2014).

2. Literature review

2.1. Key concepts in the tourism network research

Baggio and Cooper (2010, p. 1759) define stakeholders as “any person, group or institution that has an interest in a development activity, project or program”. In the tourism context, stakeholders are individuals and groups who influence or are influenced by local tourism development (Nguyen et al., 2019). According to ST, the successful development of a tourism destination is dependent on stakeholder engagement where the local destination management organisation (DMO) should identify and consider all interests of the stakeholders (Mowforth & Munt, 2016). ST helps to differentiate stakeholders by their level of salience (Mitchell et al., 1997), which is determined by their power, legitimacy, urgency, and proximity attributes (Nguyen et al., 2016). SNA allows to map stakeholders and explore how they are linked through relational ties in the network (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). SNA explains the flow of information through direct linkages from one actor to another, and through indirect links via bridging actors (Nguyen et al., 2019). The focus of this study is focusing on the rural and urban tourism networking between the entrepreneurs, but the aforementioned aspects highlight that tourism networks can contain stakeholders from public and non-profit sectors as well. Especially, in the management of the networks (Pilving et al., 2019).

One of the main concepts of ANT is a translation, which is the process where actors are transformed into actor-networks (Van der Duim, 2007). In the process of translation, relationships are formed, and actor characteristics are determined through problematisation, interessement, enrolment, and mobilisation (Callon, 1986). Through the translation process, the principal actor with proficient communication and knowledge employs others to carry on different assignments (Dedeke, 2017). ANT explains relationships between collaborating actors where power affects the level of legitimisation of actor groups (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011). However, according to ANT power is created through different relationships and is not a resource itself (Van der Duim, 2007).

ANT helps to explain the motivations of actors to join the network (Albrecht, 2013), and suggests that without performance network does not succeed (Ren, 2010). Employing both, ANT and SNA enables to investigate the network formation and visualise network structure and knowledge circulation (Wickramasinghe & Bali, 2009).

Density concept of SNT explains how tightly network members are connected. In a dense network, actors are tightly connected while in an isolated network they share few interconnections. In the dense network, actors share certain values, membership or common interests (Reagans & McEvily, 2003) that enable them to formulate, express and execute collective will (Chung & Crawford, 2016). Entrepreneurs who belong to a regional tourism network but are located far from its administrative centre can be left out from social and communication circles. Interaction between entrepreneurs can reduce isolation and increase network density by providing them with substantial knowledge and increasing their involvement in local tourism (Hatipoglu et al., 2016). Isolation is linked with different dimensions of distance (cognitive, communicative, organizational, functional, social, cultural and geographical) which all influence collaborative networking (Czernek-Marszałek, 2019). The second important concept of SNT is centrality where the closeness of actors influences their ability to reach and communicate with others in the network. Freeman (1978) points to three forms of centrality: (1) degree centrality, which is measured in various connections that lead to a certain actor and shows how active this actor is in the field of communication; (2) closeness centrality indicates how close an actor is to others in the network. It also explains actor's ability to reach other actors in the network and shows the efficiency of the communication with other actors; (3) betweenness centrality shows the shortest path between the actor and other actors and indicates the actor's ability to control the communication in the network. Entrepreneurs with high betweenness centrality can enjoy more benefits in the network because they are brokering information to different groups that are isolated from each other (Burt, 2001). A central position in the network signals the degree of power obtained, as well as the capacity to access information and different network members (Borgatti et al., 2018; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Different ties: similarities (membership, attitude or location); social relations (friendship or acquaintance); interactions (trade) and flows (recourses or information) connect actors in a network (Borgatti et al., 2009). "Strength of a weak tie" is a SNT concept that bases on the idea that in dense networks the information does not stay novel for long because everybody knows what others are doing. It means that for new ideas the information must come from the weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). However, strong ties between the actors are also important in the network because this help to solve complex problems (Montjoye et al., 2014). Therefore, both strong and weak ties are valuable for tourism network development (Houghton et al., 2009).

Some of the recent studies combine ST and SNA to research density of the tourism networks (Del Chiappa & Presenza, 2013; Nogueira & Pinho, 2015). Another set of studies have focussed on the network structure: a leadership network (Hristov et al., 2018), a network which contains tourist attraction (Liu et al., 2017) and a marketing network (Nogueira & Pinho, 2015). Some studies focus on the formation of networks (Dedeke, 2017; Tribe, 2010). Rural and urban environments differ and can be regarded as different spaces that are related to global and local networks, which configure particular places. According to ANT different spaces take their form inside the networks (Murdoch, 1998).

Halfacree's (2007) model of rural spatiality has three overlapping elements, which influence and constitute each other: representations of the rural, rural localities, and lives of the rural. The first element shows how the rural exists in formal contexts, such as in different policies, planning documents, and industrial interests. The second element refers to rural localities which have certain characteristics (e.g., cultural and natural landscape) that relates to localities through spatial practices. The third element refers to people's reproduction of rural practices in everyday life.

Explaining urban space is a difficult task because the urban environment has more elements. However, a combination of synergistic and structural perspectives allows identifying social features associated with urban space which can explain through the diversity of social roles, relationships, institutional arrangements and social networks (Aguirre, 2007).

2.2. Challenges in the tourism network development

Development of formal regional network raises the challenge of how to involve those informal and formal networks, which already exist in the tourism region, as well as entrepreneurs who do not belong to existing networks. This poses one of the key questions: should the network development incorporate a narrow or wide range of interests, and to which extent there is a common interest between entrepreneurs (Philipson et al., 2006)? According to Brandão et al. (2019), for tourism innovation, networks should be as diverse as possible.

A tourism network can be self-organised, thus operating with minimal interference from the organising entity, or the opposite, where an organisational body, which implements regional tourism policy coordinates every aspect of the network with minimum interaction between the stakeholders (Provan & Kenis, 2008). However, the case by Phillipson et al. (2006) showed that when the foundation of the network is highly informal, external intervention could destabilise the network. Therefore, the formalisation of collaboration will result in a different network compared to the informal one.

Regular social interactions between the entrepreneurs in a network help to facilitate the collaborative process. Regular interactions help to develop and sustain trust, as well as social, intellectual, and political capital. A case from Poland shows that considering the potential benefits for all involved collaboration participants helps to build trust (Czernek & Czakon, 2016). Trust building in a network happens through information and knowledge sharing and commitment (Presenza & Cipollina, 2010). However, when there are different individuals and groups involved in the cross-regional network, overcoming the aforementioned challenges can be a difficult task.

Another challenge is the facilitation of networking between diverse regional tourism entrepreneurs. While regular interactions between the entrepreneurs increase social capital and trust, Beritelli (2011) points out that regular meetings of regional tourism entrepreneurs not always initiate beneficial collective action. However, sometimes, *ad hoc* meetings that focus on a certain problem can start a collaborative relationship between the members of a network (Parker, 2000). The facilitation of tourism collaboration networking requires a neutral arbiter. The arbiter must execute collective aims and ambitions (Fyall et al., 2012). Local DMO generally plays the role of neutral arbiter in facilitating regional tourism collaboration (Caffyn, 2000). However, trust towards the DMO may vary across the entrepreneurs, setting limits on extending networking.

Different types of networks need different governance (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Van der Zee et al., 2017). Large networks that lack consensus about their scope and exhibit low levels of trust typically need high management efforts to be successful. Lead organisation-governed networks typically have a top-down management approach and have a centralised structure. In contrast, participant-governed networks are managed by their members, are based on informal relationships, and have a decentralised structure (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

The evolvement of collaboration can lead networks into stagnation (Caffyn, 2000; Pilving et al., 2019). To avoid this, new knowledge must constantly reach the network (Brandão et al., 2019). Social capital in a community must link to the networks outside of one community not only derive from the resources that exist inside of that community (Woolcock, 1998). This can be difficult to achieve in the context of diverse regional tourism networks.

Various obstacles can hinder networking: disagreements, slow decision making, different needs and vision, insufficient dialogue and leadership. Jesus and Franco (2016) showed that networking helps to fulfil objectives which are impossible to achieve in isolation. It is possible to create synergies when collaboration benefits are clear to all entrepreneurs and

there are enough interactions between the actors involved. Martínez-Pérez et al. (2019) add that diverse networks must include the widest possible range of relationships because a different type of knowledge will foster local tourism development and increase the sustainability of tourist destination.

2.3. Rural and urban tourism

Understanding the behaviour of the stakeholders in tourism networks implies understanding their context (Granovetter, 1985). Suppliers, travel intermediaries, and customers are tied together in the tourism distribution network through which tourism is developed (Pearce, 2009). A tourist destination is a complex dynamic system, where one large destination can comprise several smaller destinations (Framke, 2001). Therefore, rural and urban tourism networks can comprise several destinations in a tourist region. In the rural-urban tourism network, entrepreneurs must share a high level of interdependency. A lack of interdependency decreases collective strategic cognition, and individual actors end up focusing on their primary activities (Fyall et al., 2012). In this context, interdependencies are beneficial for the partners to combine resources and achieve competitive advantages (Teng & Das, 2008). Hence, the establishment of a regional rural-urban tourism network presumes that common ground and interests are found between different destinations and entrepreneurs. Jesus and Franco (2016, p.167) highlight that “the distinction between rural and urban enterprises is arbitrary”. It is not easy to distinguish between rural and urban tourism entrepreneurs except for the environment (rural and urban space) where they operate. Urban tourism is usually concentrated in cities where tourism is integrated into other urban activities (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Edwards et al., 2008; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). In contrast, rural tourism includes all activities that visitors do in rural areas, which relate to the culture, hospitality and traditions in rural communities. It takes place in rural areas, where the entrepreneurs are members of small local communities (Dimitrovski et al., 2012; Jaafar et al., 2015).

Rural entrepreneurs are in a disadvantaged position compared to urban counterparts where different resources are more easily accessible (Gavrilă-Paven et al., 2015). Another aspect that influences network development in a rural area is a lack of critical mass of entrepreneurs. This is especially hindering factor when there are several competing networks in a community which all need resources like people and their time (Phillipson et al., 2006). A study from Portugal showed that rural entrepreneurs do not have a definite plan regarding to whom they will collaborate. Urban entrepreneurs do better analyses on this matter and are more willing to establish collaborative relationships with a large variety of other actors. Rural

entrepreneurs collaborate with other rural entrepreneurs and in peripheral regions, they can be disconnected from wider regional networks. For urban actors, different contacts are important, and they are more willing to adopt innovations while rural entrepreneurs are less advanced on these topics (Jesus & Franco, 2016).

2.4. Rural and urban areas in Estonia from the collaboration perspective

Rural area in Estonia consists of places outside urban centres and their urban hinterlands and is characterized by sparse or very sparse population. Urban area in Estonia is a predominantly densely populated area consisting of a central town and/or suburban areas functionally linked to each other. Larger urban areas consist of municipalities with a population of more than 50,000 residents (Siseministeerium, 2014).

Rural and urban environments in Estonia have been shaped by recent communist past and transformation period. During the first independence period (1918-1940), in Estonia, cooperatives and associations were the connecting structures, which helped to raise the feeling of belonging at the community and personal level and foster collaborative relationships. During the collective farming regime, because of the scarcity of everyday supplies, an informal network of consumer acquaintances developed alongside the collective farms. When the Soviet era ended this informal network disappeared, which created a gap in collaborative relationships. The transition period after restoring independence led to several negative changes in the rural area. The deterioration of the reputation of Estonian rural life and socio-economic conditions during the transition period led to a decrease in the interdependence of rural people. This development is characterised by hard-to-accept social inequality between rural residents. Different events in the village (parties and cultural events) reinforced, not exceeded, the experience of the difference between the people. This problem could not be solved at the local level and external assistance had to be called for help. Help was received through several development programs, which aimed to activate residents and build partnerships in rural communities (Annist, 2011).

Nowadays, rural areas are characterized by a shortage of attractive jobs, limited services and leisure opportunities and weak links between the regional centre and the surrounding area. Sparsely populated and more peripheral rural areas must inevitably be able to adapt to changed circumstances. As of 2010, there were 48 rural municipalities in Estonia with about 50,000 inhabitants in total, whose population has decreased by at least half during the last 50 years or by at least one per cent per year during the last decade. Activities to implement and support regional development at the regional level have been hampered by the limited capacity of county governments, local government associations and regional umbrella

organizations largely due to the weak status of regional development plans and in implementing national policies. The lack of collaboration between municipalities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in regional development and the provision of public services has hindered regional development in a situation where people's daily activities are not limited with the borders of one municipality. Smaller municipalities alone cannot carry out large-scale development and the weak status of county development plans in directing state investments has also hindered the collaboration of local governments (Siseministeerium, 2014). Also, rural life in Estonia is affected by the fact that younger and older people have different opinions about the effects of past complex events (Martínez, 2018).

During the transition period in towns, events oriented to build nationality were replaced by wider cultural consumption (Annist, 2011). Nowadays, as a result of internal migration, a general regional pattern of the population is primarily affected by the continued concentration of the population in larger urban areas - especially in Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu, where there are the best opportunities for work, study and another self-fulfilment. The growth of larger urban areas in Estonia has primarily taken place in the form of suburbanisation and population growth in the hinterland of towns. In the vicinity of larger towns, the age groups of younger adults and children are generally over-represented compared to the rest of Estonia, and older people are under-represented. Based on the current development trends, the concentration of the population in larger cities and their surrounding municipalities will continue in the coming years. Similarly, with the population, more active economic activity is concentrated in larger urban areas, where there is a greater critical mass of people, institutions and competencies for business development. Strengthening the physical and functional links between urban centres and their rural hinterland is also becoming increasingly important in the context of both EU cohesion policy and many national regional policies (Siseministeerium, 2014).

3. Methodology

3.1. Tourism in the Pärnu region

The modern tourism era in the Pärnu region (Figure 1) began after Estonia restored independence in 1991. Estonia opened up to Western markets, which created new opportunities and increased the role of the hospitality sector (Unwin, 1996). However, tourism vocation traces back to the 19th century, with the health resort development in Pärnu town. In Pärnu town, the building of a sanatorium network began after WW II and several summerhouse establishments were built in the countryside, which made the region popular

among visitors during the communist period. Today, the region is a popular location for summer vacation (Kask, 2008).

The role of rural tourism began to grow in the early 2000s when Estonia became a part of the European Union (EU), and additional funding became available for non-agricultural rural development. Attaining the EU membership had a substantial effect on tourism in Estonia due to new investments and the opening of the borders (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008). However, in rural areas, tourism has not developed as fast as in the town. With 778,000 accommodated visitors each year (2018) (Statistics Estonia, 2020) 85% of all visitors in the region are accommodated in Pärnu town (Statistics Estonia, 2018). The accommodations in Pärnu county have more than 8,000 beds (Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2035+, 2018).

Pärnu region has adopted a strategy to foster tourism development and collaboration. Three main rural destinations – Lotte Village theme park for children, Soomaa national park, and Kihnu island, are considered as highlights in the region's rural areas (Figure 1). The regional strategy supports the development of rural destinations focused on family and conference tourists, and aims at the comprehensive development of tourism services, combining rural and urban tourism attractions (Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2030+, 2014). For the region, domestic and foreign visitors are equally important, and the primary foreign markets are Finland, Latvia, and Sweden (Alajõe et al., 2010).

Several organisations are related to tourism development in the Pärnu region. Visit Pärnu is the main public sector organisation (DMO) responsible for tourism development and collaborative networking in the region. Also, the region's LEADER action groups support tourism and companies in rural areas. LEADER groups are non-profit realities that mainly comprise small rural enterprises, local municipalities, and village associations. The Estonian Rural Tourism Organisation is a non-profit umbrella organisation of Estonian rural tourism actors in the whole country. Enterprise Estonia is the body responsible for promoting the Pärnu region globally. Many large spa hotels from Pärnu town belong to the Estonian Spa Association and Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association, non-profit organisations that represent the interests of their members domestically and abroad.

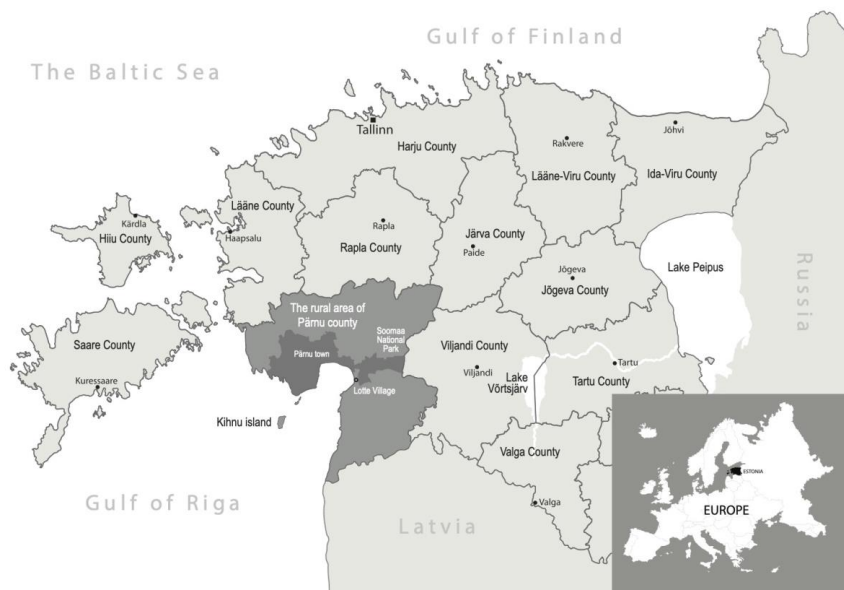


Figure 1. *Overview of the Pärnu region (author's figure).*

3.2. Data

Qualitative research design (Flick, 2014) was used in this study because it enables to explore the research object (tourism collaboration networking) in its natural context (rural-urban and post-soviet transition settings). Qualitative research postulates that individuals (e.g., tourism entrepreneurs), their experiences and behaviours are “unique, context-dependent and largely non-generalizable” (Yilmaz, 2013: 317). Therefore, as part of the qualitative design, the purposive sampling strategy was used in this study. The principles of purposeful sampling (Flick, 2014) are extensively used in qualitative research because this enables to effectively select participants in the studies which are rich in information (Patton, 2015). The strategy involves participants who are experienced in and have a high level of knowledge about the phenomenon under study (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Several studies have used successfully purposive sampling for fulfilling the research aims in the network and collaboration research (e.g., Larsen et al., 2007; Rodger et al., 2009; Skokic et al., 2019; WONDIRAD et al., 2020).

The data of this study were collected through two sets of semi-structured interviews: 10 interviews with tourism stakeholders from Pärnu town and 27 interviews with tourism stakeholders from rural areas of the Pärnu region (Table 1). Participants were chosen via personal contacts and with them, the snowball technique was used for including more study participants. This allowed minimising the negative effect of the purposive sampling that at the beginning of the study is difficult to determine how big the sample size should be (Palinkas et al., 2015). In this study the sample size emerged during the research process when it was clear how many different tourism collaboration networks in the study region are and the participant selection ended when the information from the interviews saturated itself, meaning that the interviewees no longer provided any new information. This kind of sampling approach helped to attain information about the regional networks where one entrepreneur named different enterprises, stakeholders and networks to whom he/she is connected which helped to map different networks and ties between the entrepreneurs. The following principles and justifications to construct the purposive sample were used: network representatives and entrepreneurs from rural and urban tourism areas, different fields of tourism operations, and several municipalities and tourism organisations and networks across the Pärnu region, along with active/passive and new/old tourism entrepreneurs and network representatives were included. This was guided by the principle to identify similarities and differences (Palinkas et al., 2015) in the regional collaboration networks. This study focuses on the entrepreneurs, however, because of the complexity of networking phenomena, representatives from other sectors (public and non-profit) were also interviewed (Table 1). Another important aspect here is that in Estonia (especially in the rural areas) many non-profits or public sector organisations offer tourism services as well. For example, the Pärnu Guiding Association is a non-profit organisation or a manor in the rural Pärnu which belongs to the local government but offers accommodation and catering for visitors or village associations which offer adventure guiding. On one hand, the aim was to select interviewees who are or have been actively involved in the tourism networks of the study region. On the other hand, to get a better overview of regional tourism networks, those entrepreneurs who have been more passive in networking were also included in the sample. Usually, social network research focuses either on formalism or relationalism. Formalism means that the focus is on an objective view of networks' structure and relationalism deals with the meaning and experience of relationships and the latter examines the network from an insider's perspective (Erikson, 2013) which is also the case with this study.

More participants from the rural Pärnu region were chosen because the rural area is larger than the urban area, and the location of the entrepreneurs and distance from each other and Pärnu town can be essential for understanding the collaborative ties between rural and urban entrepreneurs.

The interviewees from the non-profit and public sector comprise several tourism organisations, municipalities, and existing tourism networks in the region. The sample includes both large and small enterprises from rural and urban areas. Some interviewees combine (a mix of) several tourism-related services on the daily basis (Table 1). Many participants (especially from the rural area) had multiple occupations. Because of the high seasonality in Estonian tourism entrepreneurs also work beside their business and have parallel jobs in local government, destination management organisation, in some local association or LEADER group or they have worked before in different tourism settings and fields. For example, the representative of a large spa has previously worked in the rural tourism company and the representative of the theme park in a large spa hotel in the Pärnu town. This ensured their high awareness and knowledge in the matter of regional tourism networking. Interviews were also conducted with entrepreneurs who only run their business and are regular members of some collaboration network in the region or do not belong to any network for getting a more detailed overview of the phenomena.

Table 1. *Overview of the interviewees.*

Field of operation	Urban stakeholders (includes large spa, small urban enterprises and urban tourism network representatives)	Rural stakeholders (includes rural enterprises and representatives of different rural networks)
Active vacation activities	5 (adventure park, surf club, fishing village, bike rental, adventure guiding)	3 (surfing, nature guiding, horse riding)
Accommodation	1 (large spa)	6 (larger and smaller accommodation providers)
Food	1 (catering)	3 (catering)

Mixed	2 (fishing and camping, theme park)	10 (accommodation and food, handicraft and museums)
Non-profit and public sector	1 (representative of local DMO, guide association)	5 (village association, representatives of the local governments and representatives of the LEADER group)

The interview questions covered the following themes: the local tourism environment, the role of rural and urban tourism destination management, networking, decision making, the roles of DMOs and different actors in regional tourism, collaborative relationships and ties between rural and urban enterprises, as well as entrepreneurial benefits, motives, and problems related to collaboration. During the interviews, participants were asked to name all networks to which they belong to and other entrepreneurs to whom they collaborate and explain the ties and relationships during the networking which allowed to map different networks (Figure 3). The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, and all interview sessions were carried out between 2017 and 2018. All collected data were transcribed and coded using the MGT analysing principles.

3.3. The multi-grounded analysis

The research design of this study relies on the MGT, existing theories (ST, ANT, SNA, and SNT). MGT (Figure 2) enables the formulation (multi-grounding) of theoretical statements from empirical data and the development of an emerging theory by combining induction and deduction and build a research design that overcomes the limitations of existing theories. This approach allows thorough use of empirical data without limiting the study with a narrow theoretical focus, which may prevent the emergence of new knowledge. The MGT also enables to overcome the limitations of grounded theory (mainly introvert theorising and over-generalisation) (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

The analysis begins with collecting preliminary theoretical arguments about the phenomena of interest. The concepts that emerge in different phases of multi-grounding are constantly assessed in the research process. In the final research phase, the generated theory is connected with the different origins of the achieved knowledge to prove its validity (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). During the research process, the research design can

constantly change because of continuous theoretical matching and empirical validation during the research process (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006).

MGT is typically employed in complex studies such as the typology of social media marketing (Coursaris et al., 2013), business process theory (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006) and higher education (Freeman, 2018).

Theory development

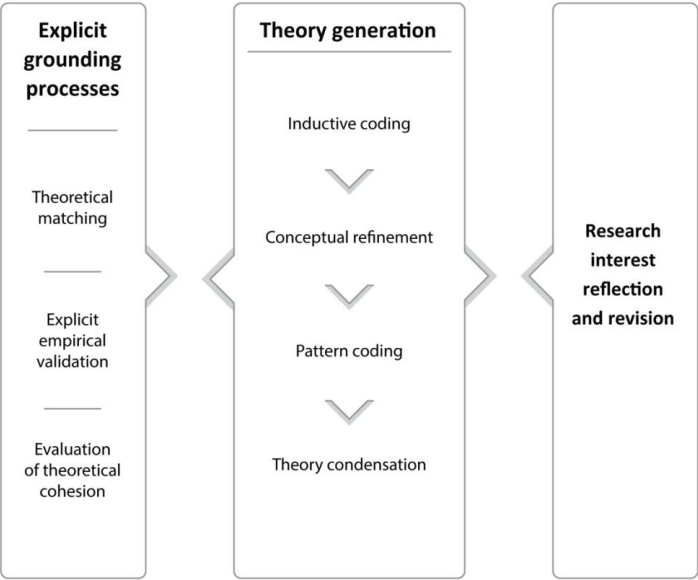


Figure 2. According to Cronholm & Goldkuhl (2010) the working structure of MGT (author's figure).

The generation of theoretical statements during the MGT process consists of four-steps (Figure 2) (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010). After the transcription, data were inductively coded closely to the text, without any pre-conceptions to prevent the loss of emerging concepts. Then the primary categorisation of codes was created, without any predetermined

theoretical categorisations (Step 1). During this phase, the entity of different networks, ties, relationships, connections and density between networks of rural and urban entrepreneurs started to emerge. In this phase all codes were collected from different interviews and categorised to different topics. The first step allowed to map different stakeholders and networks with the use of insider view and SNA.

In the conceptual refinement phase (Step 2), the codes were assessed for categorisation. Conceptual refinement creates a 'comprehensive definition of categories' (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010, p. 195). The MGT process assumes that the concepts that emerge in different phases of MGT are constantly assessed. In this phase, the codes, categories, and research notes were taken and collected during the interviews and different research stages were compared with each other. Here, also all empirical concepts that emerged from the first phase were critically challenged, examined and assessed before the next level of categorisation. During this phase, codes were regrouped, renamed, aggregated and deleted. In the pattern coding phase (Step 3), the categories and codes that emerged from previous phases were compared with the concepts of ST, ANT, and SNT, mainly with those that explain density, salience, centrality and strength of different ties and relationships, level of power and information and knowledge flow. In this phase, a new set of categories was created. In this phase inductive approach met with the deductive approach.

Theory condensation is the last phase (Step 4) of the MGT process. This phase was preceded by different explicit grounding processes, which included theoretical matching, explicit empirical validation, and evaluation of theoretical cohesion. In this phase, the evolving theory was grounded, the empirical validity of the emerging theoretical statements was tested and evolving theoretical statements were formulated. This was assured with constant assessing the emerging theory by all authors.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Urban networking space

Data gathered from the interviews enabled to identify and map (Figure 3) existing networks in urban and rural space. For the characterisation of collaborative ties, it is useful to consider the urban space in two levels and explore collaborative ties between; 1) key urban enterprises; 2) small urban enterprises, and 3) key urban and small urban enterprises (Figure 3).

One key principle of ANT highlights that places with similar elements and relations are close to each other and the proximity of different networks is related to space and time (Murdoch, 1998). It was found that in the urban tourism space, the ties between key urban tourism enterprises represent the first central level of collaboration. Interviewees highlight that a

significant share of the visitors arrives in the region through channels controlled by key enterprises who have established relationships with public sector and shape tourism in the town. The roots of this situation date back to the beginning of the 1990s when sanatoriums in Pärnu town were privatised. The acquisition of existing infrastructures and extensive marketing generated significant interest in the Finnish market, which is the main visitor segment in the area. This helped to turn former sanatoriums into spas and give them a dominant position in the area. Key enterprises are open to collaborative relationships with others. A representative of a large spa explains:

"We have our company newspaper for promotion. In every edition, we have one article about rural tourism in the Pärnu region and if our clients ask about where to go in the countryside, we always recommend some businesses. I think that we have taken the first step and now the ball is in their hands".

Municipality of Pärnu town is actively involved in shaping and implementing local tourism strategy. In rural areas, there are different municipalities which tourism development related activities differ to a great extent. However, communities in the tourist region distinguish themselves less by formal rules and more by their key enterprises (Beritelli, 2011). This study's results show that dominant enterprises are involved in different working groups responsible for tourism development (e.g., infrastructure, strategic aims, and collective marketing), and thereby shape the local tourism policy. Key urban enterprises are salient, and DMO involves them to roundtables to discuss and decide on the development of tourism in Pärnu town and region. Also, they are involved in different professional networks (e.g., Estonian Spa Association, Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association) which have helped them to establish a social network between them and have a strong influence on shaping the local tourism policy. However, the local tourism policymaking does not have a clear formal structure and is activated when needed. A spa representative illustrates co-working as follows:

"Usually, we gather around the table when we have to make some big decisions in the region like the expansion of the local airport".

Beside the key enterprises, there are many smaller ones in the Pärnu town. Relationships between those enterprises can be characterised by high competition between them and they

have not formed a collaboration network with each other. Usually, these enterprises target the spa visitors meaning that they don't have to look for the clients themselves and depend on the clients that the spas bring to the town. A representative of an adventure park explains the situation:

"We mostly want to offer our service to the spa clients and holidaymakers on the beach. Doing this, we compete with the other adventure park".

Jesus and Franco (2016) show that the relationships between urban enterprises are highly planned and organised. This study adds to this that large tourism enterprises often need the services provided by smaller ones for motivating tourists to extend the length of stay. A spa representative remark that:

"Recently, we contacted one entrepreneur who has a minizoo. We want to collaborate with her and offer minizoo tours to our family clients who spend more time in our hotel. We don't offer services like those ourselves and this kind of collaborations help to keep the visitors longer with us".

In Pärnu town, where Finnish tourists represent the primary visitor segment, local spas depend on Finnish resellers to fill their rooms. Small urban tourism enterprises also target Finnish tourists, which creates a dependency relationship (Figure 3) between the key and small tourism enterprises.

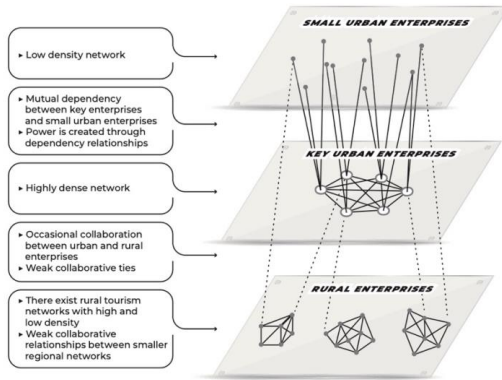


Figure 3. *Collaborative ties between different regional networks (author's figure).*

Bramwell and Lane (2000) highlight that entrepreneurs must remain independent in collaboration. However, in the case of Pärnu town, collaborative dependency can be described as mutualism with some weakness where entrepreneurs' independence is limited mainly because small enterprises do not have control over their clients. The relationships between large and small urban enterprises are not dyadic. The more powerful partner can always withdraw from the collaboration (Ford et al., 2012) especially when collaborative relationships take place informally. For example, when a client asks in the spa reception where to rent a bike from, the received suggestion will depend on the relationship between large and small enterprises.

In this context, key urban enterprises are salient, but due to the dependency, their relationships with small ones do not create a tourism network. Ties are created between them, but they remain weak. Besides mutual gain, key and small enterprises do not share knowledge or information and have minimal social relations. In this context, key enterprises enjoy the benefits from high betweenness centrality because they possess and share information with others at their own will. Jesus and Franco (2016) point out that weak ties between actors are highly formalised and based on short-term relationships, while strong ties

are based on close relationships and repeated transactions. The results of this study add that weak informal ties in this context, even in the presence of mutual benefits and strategic cognition, are based more on the business transaction than a collaboration network between two groups of different enterprises. According to ANT, besides social relations networks also include material objects (e.g., tourism infrastructure) which creates a certain space which refers to a type of network "where the links between actors and intermediaries are provisional and divergent, where norms are hard to establish and standards are frequently compromised" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 362). From ANT perspective, the situation between two groups of entrepreneurs indicates that the position of power is manifested by the key enterprises through those dependency relationships (Figure 3). Several representatives of small enterprises highlight the need to develop new services in the low season and try to step out from the dependency relationships. However, they face difficulties in finding clients because of the strong spa and beach holiday image. The adventure park representative explains:

"Some time ago did a marketing campaign to raise awareness that there are more things in the Pärnu region than just beach and spas, but we did not receive that many customers. I think that the town and spas are doing a lot of work to keep this summer holiday image in the region and small enterprises cannot change that".

However, some events (summer festivals and the Pärnu Restaurant Week in April) occasionally connect large and small urban enterprises for a joint networking effort. Despite being annual, the one-off nature of these events implies that they do not have a substantial impact on creating a collaborative network, which is based on common values and trust not dependency between large and small urban enterprises.

4.2. Rural networking space

In rural space, there are several local collaborative networks of tourism entrepreneurs. Some of them are associated with LEADER local action groups, i.e., these networks have emerged based on the existing collaborative networks (Figure 3). Despite the organisational support (e.g., collective marketing and marketplace, the possibility to apply for EU funding, socialisation events and workshops aimed for business development) provided by those groups, regional rural tourism networks are mostly self-organised, and decisions are made by their members. However, ties between different rural collaborative networks are not well established (Figure 3). There are several reasons for this. There exist a couple of very dense rural tourism networks (Kihnu island, Soomaa national park) in the region where members

are closely located to each other, and that base on trust and frequent socialisation and information sharing between the members. On the other hand, there are other rural networks where density is low, members have social and locational distance between them, and where closeness centrality is low. The ties between the entrepreneurs with high locational distance are characterized by trust, friendship, resource and information sharing but it is not enough for achieving higher density which is needed for the growth of the network and connecting different networks. A rural entrepreneur illustrates the current situation:

"Many tourists visit Kihnu island or Soomaa national park; after that, they go back home without visiting other destinations in the area ".

Connecting different networks requires common aims which is difficult to achieve. Rural entrepreneur continues:

"All destinations in the Pärnu region are different and they all have different aims and vision. For example, the Kihnu island is a UNESCO heritage site and they do not have any problem to find visitors. Question is, why do they have to collaborate with Soomaa? The answer could be that in the future the tourism should focus more on developing functional tourist routes that will also guide visitors to other destinations in the region. This allows us to keep visitors longer in the region, but this is difficult to achieve. But right now, this is more like a dream or long-term vision".

Collaborative networking between the rural entrepreneurs takes the form of combining services (e.g., active holiday, accommodation and catering), and socialising (e.g., workshops that focus on learning and community tourism development, study trips and festivals). According to SNT, nodes and ties form a system where different actors affect each other or the whole system and the network (Fyall et al., 2012; Wellman, 1988). Freeman (1978) highlights that the closeness of a network participant influences his/her ability to reach and communicate with others in the network. Dependency on rural networks is high because of the limited resources of a single entrepreneur but compared to urban networks information and resource sharing is mutually beneficial.

From a regional perspective, resource allocation is achieved through collaborative efforts for increasing competitiveness (Jesus & Franco, 2012). It is a complicated process involving various networks in large tourist regions. In the core-periphery context, the periphery is

usually far (both geographically and socially) from the core, where the main markets are, and decisions are made. However, rural networks can also form a core (Kauppila et al., 2009) in a specific location, as some networks addressed by this study. This suggests that the urban network might not be the only central group of actors in the tourism region. Dense rural networks can also be local or regional cores because of the low dependency from other regional networks (Figure 3). Rural networks that stand out in the region do not depend on urban tourists, and their visitors are usually not interested in visiting surrounding sights. Therefore, it would be difficult to motivate small high- and low-density networks to join a large regional tourism network.

4.3. Regional networking space

The results confirm the complexity of rural-urban networking. A spa representative highlights that *'it is difficult to define collaboration in this context'*. This suggests that in Pärnu region, the ties between the existing networks in urban and rural tourism space are not established. Therefore, as suggested by the ST, since the DMO does not involve and address the interests of the tourism entrepreneurs with different salience (Mitchell et al., 1997), regional tourism networking suffers.

The findings are in line with the ANT in that networks in the region are heterogeneous (Dedeke, 2017; Ren, 2010). There are different reasons why the region-wide network of tourism entrepreneurs has not formed. First, despite the common interests between the high- and low-density networks in the region, it is difficult to find clear aims on those interests on the regional level because the basis of regional rural and urban networks is different. Second, despite the position of power of key enterprises in the region, they have a low influence on dense rural networks. This correlates with the ANT in that without relationships between the actors, power is not a resource itself (Nguyen et al., 2019). High betweenness centrality in this context means that key enterprises broke information mostly to small urban enterprises. Dense rural networks do not need knowledge and information offered by the key enterprises because they can access and gather knowledge by themselves. However, tourism networks are constantly evolving and finally, they stagnate (Caffyn, 2000; Pilving et al., 2019). The results show that this influences especially highly dense networks. Diversity is the key to network innovation (Brandão et al., 2019), but it is difficult to create ties with low-density networks when they are socially far from dense networks.

Third, there is no principal agent in the region who can activate rural and urban entrepreneurs in setting the goals of the regional tourism strategy. Dense rural networks have their principal agents, and the same situation is in town. In the complex environment where urban and rural

development has followed different paths for decades and where the regional tourism management of the area has focused on the town and LEADER groups have developed rural areas a common basis for regional tourism network development is not established. Interviewees highlight that current tourism organisational structure is not capable to fulfil a strategic aim of rural-urban common network and this requires new kind of institutional development through which a new principal agent can evolve. Murdoch (1998, p.363) highlights that "the most unified networks tend also to be the most formal". However, in the Pärnu region, tourism networks are informal and the reason behind this is the evolvement of post-communist turbulent environment where different reforms have hindered the development of principal agent who is capable to create ties between different regional networks through formal relationships. To illustrate this situation the spa representative points out that:

"We have tried to contact different rural enterprises and networks, but usually we do not get many answers. So, we have taken initiative, but without the initiative from the rural side it is difficult to proceed with the regional networking".

However, from a rural side, there is a fear that more collaboration with urban entrepreneurs the urban interests will still dominate in the region. A rural entrepreneur points out that:

"Urban entrepreneurs have enjoyed the benefits of Finnish visitors. In the rural areas we do not have had that and I think that it has been much more difficult for us. I think that more collaboration with them means that finally they will swallow us and secure their dominance over us".

Spa representative replies that:

"There is no basis for the fears of rural entrepreneurs. I think that they are having the inferiority complex of some kind".

The above-mentioned aspects show that there is a lot of misunderstanding between urban and rural entrepreneurs because of lack of socialisation and links between different regional networks which make finding a common ground a challenging task.

Some entrepreneurs in the region offer services targeted to urban visitors, but they also operate in the rural area and autonomously look for clients, which helps them combine benefits offered by rural and urban networks. SNT contends that network participants are more successful when they occupy a central position in the network (Freeman, 1978). This study shows that by being active in both the rural and urban market, an actor may participate in both networks, creating a positive outcome for the company but not necessarily creating a connection between rural and urban networks (Figure 3). The entrepreneurs that belong to two networks can access members and information (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) from both markets. The numbers of such enterprises are increasing because in recent times urban visitors are becoming more and more interested in rural areas.

5. Conclusions

By applying ST, ANT, SNA, SNT, MGT, and a qualitative approach, this study aimed to answer the following research questions: (1) what is the nature of collaborative ties between entrepreneurs and sub-networks in a tourist region; (2) how different ties between regional tourism networks foster and hinder the development of rural-urban tourism network? The main contribution of this study is new insights on how diverse networks of tourism entrepreneurs' function in urban and rural space, and by which ties the entrepreneurs are connected. The novel use of MGT in the network research has proven suitable for studying tourism networks allowing to overcome previous limitations in network research.

Figure 4 summarises the aspects that explain the formation of ties between regional networks of tourism entrepreneurs. The regional tourism networking can be analysed from network-specific and regional aspects. The latter refers to urban and rural space, which may have differences in their: (1) entrepreneurial setting (e.g. size and competitiveness of enterprises, entrepreneurial skills); (2) existing networks and networking practices (e.g. networks lead by dominant enterprises, LEADER groups engaging different public and private stakeholders); (3) public sector involvement in tourism development (e.g. initiative of municipalities in formulating regional tourism strategies, and establishment of institutions to implement actions to achieve strategic aims), and finally; (4) visitors (e.g. spa visitors in the urban area, and nature tourists in rural areas).

Network-specific aspects are related to the specific aim of regional tourism network. Often, the aim of regional tourism networking is related to increasing the competitiveness of tourist region and enhancing the capacity of local tourism entrepreneur.

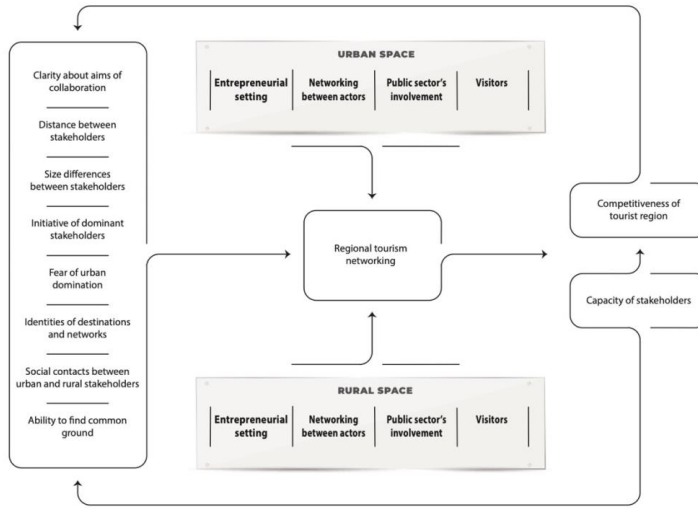


Figure 4. *Aspects that influence the evolvement of regional tourism network (author's figure).*

Results show that it is important to find a common ground (Figure 4). This relates both to the capacity of the entrepreneurs, and the clarity of aims of collaboration. Also, the higher capacity of the entrepreneurs makes it easier to make agreements on regional collaboration. There must be clarity about the aims of regional tourism networking through which diverse entrepreneurs can create mutual benefits (Figure 4). The results reveal two broad categories of benefits of collaborative networking. Improved competitiveness of a tourist region (joint

marketing, ability to implement larger projects, a larger variety of services to visitors), and improved capacity of entrepreneurs (through bringing together dispersed entrepreneurs, and community development). Confusing aims hinder the formation of a joint rural-urban network. This suggests that more awareness about the potential and achievable benefits is needed together with specific and measurable goals of the collaboration.

The capacity of the entrepreneurs is positively associated with the competitiveness of tourist region. This suggests that the entrepreneurs in the study region acknowledge the relevance and potential of the strength of the weak ties that is a vital resource in solving the complex challenge of bringing the tourist region out from stagnation.

Results show that when a tourism entrepreneur is strongly connected with a certain community in a tourist region, he/she has stronger collaborative ties with other stakeholders in that community. However, strong collaborative ties inside a community do not necessarily create strong ties with other communities in the region. There are limited connections between rural and urban enterprises, but also between local networks of rural tourism enterprises. The mere physical distance between these enterprises and lack of social connections hinder networking. Missing ties between the entrepreneurs make information sharing in the (potential) network a mission impossible.

The results are in line with the suggestion of ANT that in the rural-urban setting the possible initiative of dominant enterprises can trigger the growth of collaborative ties between different entrepreneurs. At the same time, it appeared that rural enterprises are cautious and fear urban domination in regional tourism network. It also appeared that the differences between identities of sub-regional destinations and networks hinder regional tourism networking. This aspect has not gained much attention in the academic literature before. Findings indicate that it is important to involve all entrepreneur groups to goal setting and take advantage of the strength of the weak ties.

It is important to consider the contexts of urban and rural tourism space in regional tourism networking. Therefore, applying the SNT for exploring the nature of ties within a network is an important element of regional tourism network studies. In the case of Pärnu region, the urban and rural space are quite different in their entrepreneurial setting (Figure 4), networking between stakeholders, the public sector's involvement, and visitors.

Based on the results, the study has two recommendations for developing rural and urban networks. First, the DMO must involve entrepreneurs with different level of salience in tourist destination management. This helps to create ties between entrepreneurs and networks that operate in rural and urban tourism space. Second, the regional tourism networking needs

to utilise the potential that lies in the strength of the weak ties which are often found in low-density networks. This is a valuable resource in bringing the tourist region out from stagnation.

The findings suggest that further research in this field is necessary. In the environment of this study rural and urban tourism entrepreneurs share mostly informal relationships, however, collaborative ties can be different if the relationships between the entrepreneurs are formalised. The study focussed on the relationships and ties between the entrepreneurs in the tourism networking context but focus on the public and non-profit sector in the rural-urban networking setting needs further research and discussion. Despite the extensive analysis of one tourist region, which has a unique cultural, historical, and geographical legacy, the results of this study may not be generalised to other environments. Future studies should address different social, economic, and cultural contexts to develop a more general theoretical understanding of rural-urban collaboration networks. This research focussed on different networks in certain timeframe. However, networks are constantly evolving which means that a longitudinal approach may open up new perspectives in understanding rural and urban networking phenomenon and the evolvement of ties between the stakeholders. This study indicates that the use of MGT and qualitative methods are suitable for studying rural and urban tourism networks at the regional level. However, other methodological approaches may add new insights and aspects which concern rural-urban networking on a regional level.

6. References

Aguirre, A. (2007). Urban Space. In G. Ritzer (Eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosu018>

Ahrens, P. (2018). Qualitative network analysis: A useful tool for investigating policy networks in transnational settings? *Methodological Innovations* 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799118769816>

Alajõe, S., Gammer, G., Müristaja, H., & Semevsky, M. (2010). Suur-Pärnu turismisihtkoha väljaarendamise kava [The Tourism Development Plan of the Big-Pärnu]. Retrieved March 12, 2019, from <http://pol.parnumaa.ee/content/editor/files/Suur-Pärnu%20turism.pdf>

Albrecht, J. N. (2013). Networking for sustainable tourism—towards a research agenda. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 21(5), 639-657. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2012.721788>

Annist, A. (2011). *Seeking community in post-socialist centralised villages. A study in anthropology of development*. Tallinn University.

Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2030+ [Development Strategy of Pärnumaa 2030+]. (2014). Retrieved January 4, 2019, from <https://maakonnaplaneering.ee/documents/2845826/18605510/Arengustrateegia+Pärnumaa+2030+.pdf/eacd007c-79cf-4c48-9436-6d438f5e4348>

Arengustrateegia Pärnumaa 2035+ [Development Strategy of Pärnumaa 2035+]. (2018). Retrieved March 19, 2020, from <http://pol.parnumaa.ee/content/editor/files/Pärnumaa%20arengustrateegia%2007.09.2018.pdf>

Arnaboldi, M., & Spiller, N. (2011). Actor-network theory and stakeholder collaboration: The case of cultural districts. *Tourism Management* 32(3), 641–654. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.05.016>

Ashworth, G., & Page, S. (2011). Urban tourism research: Recent progress and current paradoxes. *Tourism Management* 32(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.02.002>

Baggio, R., & Cooper, C. (2010). Knowledge transfer in a tourism destination: The effects of a network structure. *The Service Industries Journal* 30(10), 1757–1771. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642060903580649>

Baggio, R., Scott, N., & Cooper, C. (2010a). Network science. A review focused on tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 37(3), 802-827. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.02.008>

Baggio, R., Scott, N., & Cooper, C. (2010b). Improving tourism destination governance: A complexity science approach. *Tourism Review* 6(4), 51-60. 10.1108/16605371011093863

Beaumont, N., & Dredge, D. (2010). Local tourism governance: A comparison of three network approaches. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 18(1), 7–28. DOI: 10.1080/09669580903215139

- Beritelli, P. (2011). Cooperation among prominent actors in a tourist destination. *Annals of Tourism Research* 38(2), 607-629. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.11.015>
- Bjørnskov, C. (2007). Determinants of generalized trust: A cross-country comparison. *Public Choice* 130(1-2), 1-21. DOI: 10.1007/s11127-006-9069-1
- Borgatti, S. P., Everett, M. G., & Johnson, J. C. (2018). *Analyzing social networks (2 ed.)*. LA, London: SAGE.
- Borgatti, S.P., Mehra, A., Brass, D., & Labianca, G. (2009). Network Analysis in the Social Sciences. *Science* 5916(323), 892 - 895. DOI: 10.1126/science.1165821
- Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2000). Collaboration and partnerships in tourism planning. In B. Bramwell & B. Lane (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: Politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 230–246). Channel View Publications.
- Brandão, F., Breda, Z., Costa, C. (2019). Innovation and internationalization as development strategies for coastal tourism destinations: The role of organizational networks. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 41, 219-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2019.10.004>
- Bredvold, R., & Skalen, P. (2016). Lifestyle entrepreneurs and their identity construction: A study of the tourism industry. *Tourism Management* 56, 96-105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.03.023>
- Caffyn, A. (2000). Is there a tourism partnership life cycle? In B. Bramwell & B. Lane. (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 200–229). Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Callon, M. (1986). Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay. *The Sociological Review* 32(1), 196–233. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1984.tb00113.x>

- Chung, K. S. H., Crawford, L. (2016). The Role of Social Networks Theory and Methodology for Project Stakeholder Management. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences* 226, 372-380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.06.201>
- Coursaris, C. K., Van Osch, W., & Balogh, B.A. (2013). A Social Media Marketing Typology: Classifying Brand Facebook Page Messages for Strategic Consumer Engagement. *ECIS 2013 Completed Research*. 46. https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2013_cr/46
- Cresswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research*. 2nd. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA
- Czernek, K., Czakon, W., & Marzsalek, P. (2017). Trust and formal contracts: complements or substitutes? A study of tourism collaboration in Poland. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 6(4), 318-326. DOI: 10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.07.001
- Czernek, K., & Czakon, W. (2016). Trust-building processes in tourist cooptation: The case of a Polish region. *Tourism Management* 52, 380-394. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2015.07.009
- Czernek, K. (2013). Determinants of cooperation in a tourist region. *Annals of Tourism Research* 40, 83-104. DOI: 10.1016/j.annals.2012.09.003
- Czernek-Marszałek, K. (2019). Distance dimensions and their impact on business cooperation in a tourist destination. *Research Papers of Wroclaw University of Economics* 63(7), 218-229. DOI: 10.15611/pn.2019.7.17
- Cronholm, S., & Goldkuhl, G. (2010). Adding theoretical grounding to grounded theory: Toward multi-grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 9(2), 187-205. DOI: 10.1177/160940691000900205
- Dedeke, A. N. (2017). Creating sustainable tourism ventures in protected areas: An actor-network theory analysis. *Tourism Management* 61, 161–172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.02.006>
- Del Chiappa, G., & Presenza, A. (2013). The use of network analysis to assess relationships

- among stakeholders within a tourism destination: An empirical investigation on Costa Smeralda-Gallura, Italy. *Tourism Analysis* 18(1), 1–13.
10.3727/108354213X13613720283520
- Dimitrovski, D., Todorović, A., & Valjarević, A. (2012). Rural tourism and regional development: Case study of development of rural tourism in the region of Gruža, Serbia. *Procedia Environmental Sciences* 14, 288-297. 10.1016/j.proenv.2012.03.028
- Dredge, D. (2006). Policy networks and the local organisation of tourism. *Tourism Management* 27(2), 269-280. 10.1016/j.tourman.2004.10.003
- Edwards, D., Griffin, T., & Hayllar, B. (2008). Urban tourism research: developing an agenda. *Annals of Tourism Research* 35(4), 1032-1052. 10.1016/j.annals.2008.09.002
- Erikson, E. (2013). Formalist and relationalist theory in social network analysis. *Sociological Theory* 31(3), 219–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275113501998>
- Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research (5th ed.)*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Framke, W. (2001). *The 'destination': A problematic concept*. Paper presented at 10th-19–20. October 2001 Nordic Tourism Research Conference, Vasa.
- Ford, C.R., Wang, Y., & Vestal, A. (2012). Power asymmetries in tourism distribution networks. *Annals of Tourism Research* 39(2), 755-779. 10.1016/j.annals.2011.10.001
- Freeman, L. C. (1978). Centrality in Social Networks: Conceptual Clarification. *Social Networks* 1(3), 215-239. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-8733\(78\)90021-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-8733(78)90021-7)
- Freeman, R.E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston, Pitman.
- Freeman, S. (2018). Utilizing Multi-Grounded Theory in a Dissertation: Reflections and Insights. *The Qualitative Report* 23(5), 1160-1175.
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss5/10>

- Fyall, A., Garrod, B., & Wang, Y. (2012). Destination collaboration: A critical review of theoretical approaches to a multi-dimensional phenomenon. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 1(1-2), 10–26. 10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.10.002
- Gavrilă-Paven, I., Constantin, B. M., Dogaru, L. D. (2015). Advantages and Limits for Tourism Development in Rural Area (Case Study Ampoi and Mureș Valleys). *Procedia Economics and Finance* 32, 1050-1059. 10.1016/S2212-5671(15)01567-1
- Granovetter, M.S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *The American Journal of Sociology* 78(6), 1360-1380. <https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~jure/pub/papers/granovetter73ties.pdf>
- Granovetter, M. S. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology* 91, 481–510. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2780199?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents
- Halfacree, K. (2007). Trial by space for a ‘radical rural’: Introducing alternative localities, representations and lives. *Journal of Rural Studies* 23, 125-141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2006.10.002>
- Hatipoglu, B., Alvarez, M. D., & Ertuna, B. (2016). Barriers to stakeholder involvement in the planning of sustainable tourism: The case of the Thrace region in Turkey. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 111, 306-317. 10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.11.059
- Houghton, S., Smith, A., & Hood, J. (2009). The influence of social capital on strategic choice: An examination of the effects of external and internal networks relationships on strategic complexity. *Journal of Business Research* 62(12), 1255-1261. 10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.01.002
- Hristov, D., Minocha, S., & Ramkissoon, H. (2018). Transformation of destination leadership networks. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 28, 239-250. 10.1016/j.tmp.2018.09.004
- Jaafar, M., Rasoolimanesh, S., & Lonik, K. (2015). Tourism growth and entrepreneurship: Empirical analysis of development of rural highlands. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 14,

17-24. 10.1016/j.tmp.2015.02.001

Jarvis, J., & Kallas, P. (2008). Estonian Tourism and the Accession Effect: The Impact of European Union Membership on the Contemporary Development Patterns of the Estonian Tourism Industry. *Tourism Geographies* 10(4), 474-494.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616680802434080>

Jesus, C., & Franco, M. (2016). Cooperation networks in tourism: A study of hotels and rural tourism establishments in an inland region of Portugal. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 29, 165-175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2016.07.005>

Jones, T. M., & Wicks, A. C. (1999). Convergent stakeholder theory. *Academy of Management Review* 24(2), 206–221. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/259075>

Kask, T. (2008). The Development of Pärnu Resort. Retrieved January 14, 2020, from <http://resort175.weebly.com/resort.html>

Kauppila, P., Saarinen, J., & Leinonen, R. (2009). Sustainable Tourism Planning and Regional Development in Peripheries: A Nordic View. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 9(4), 424-435. 10.1080/15022250903175274

Larsen, J., Urry, J., & Axhausen, K. (2007). Networks and tourism: Mobile Social Life. *Annals of Tourism Research* 34, 244-262. 10.1016/j.annals.2006.08.002.

Lind, M., & Goldkuhl, G. (2006). How to Develop a Multi-Grounded Theory: the evolution of a business process theory. *Australasian Journal of Information Systems* 13(2). 10.3127/ajis.v13i2.41

Liu, B., Huang, S. S., & Fu, H. (2017). An application of network analysis on tourist attractions: The case of Xinjiang, China. *Tourism Management* 58, 132–141. 10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.009

Local Authorities of Pärnu County. (2020). Welcome to Pärnu County. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from <http://pol.parnumaa.ee/defaulten>

- Luthe, T., & Wyss, R. (2014). Assessing and planning resilience in tourism. *Tourism Management* 44, 161-163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.03.011>
- Martínez-Pérez, A., Elche, D., García-Villaverde, P. (2019). From diversity of interorganizational relationships to radical innovation in tourism destination: The role of knowledge exploration. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 11, 80-88. 10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.12.002
- Martínez, F. (2018). *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia: An Anthropology of Forgetting, Repair and Urban Traces*. London: UCL Press.
- Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. G., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review* 22(4), 853–886. 10.2307/259247
- Montjoye, Y., -A, d., Stopczynski, A., Shmueli, E., Pentland, A., & Lehmann, S. (2014). The strenght of the strongest ties in collaborative problem solving. *Scientific Reports (Nature Publishing Group)* 4(5227), 6. 10.1038/srep05277
- Mowforth, M., & Munt. I. (2016). *Tourism and sustainability: Development, globalisation and new tourism in the third world (4 ed.)*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Murdoch, J. 1998. The spaces of actor-network theory. *Geoforum* 29(4), 357-374. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(98\)00011-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(98)00011-6)
- Nguyen, T.Q.T., Young, T., Johnson, P., & Wearing, S. (2019). Conceptualising networks in sustainable tourism development. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 32. 10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100575
- Nogueira, S., & Pinho, J. C. (2015). Stakeholder network integrated analysis: The specific case of rural tourism in the Portuguese Peneda-Gerês National Park. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 17(4), 325–336. 10.1002/jtr.1989

- Novelli, M., Schmitz, B., & Spencer, T. (2006). Networks, clusters and innovation in tourism: A UK experience. *Tourism Management* 27, 1141–1152.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.11.011>
- Otte, E., & Rousseau, R. (2002). Social network analysis: a powerful strategy, also for the information sciences. *Journal of Information Science*, 28(6), 441–453.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/016555150202800601>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and policy in mental health* 42(5), 533–544.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Parker, S. (2000). Collaboration on Tourism Policy Making: Environmental and Commercial Sustainability in Bonaire, NA. In B. Bramwell & B. Lane. (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability*. Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications, 200–229.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice. Fourth Edition*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Pearce, D. G. (2009). Beyond tiers: A network approach to tourism distribution. *Tourism Analysis* 13, 517–530. 10.3727/108354208788160496
- Pechlaner, H., & Volgger, M. (2012). How to promote cooperation in the hospitality industry: Generating practitioner-relevant knowledge using the GABEK qualitative research strategy. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 24(6), 925–945.
10.1108/09596111211247245
- Phillipson, J., Gorton, M., & Laschewski, L. (2006). Local business cooperation and the dilemmas of collective action: Rural micro-business networks in the north of England. *Sociologia Ruralis* 46, 40–59. 10.1111/j.1467-9523.2006.00401.x
- Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2019). The tourism partnership life cycle

in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 31, 219-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>

Porter, M. E. (1990). *Competitive advantage of nations: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Presenza, A., & Cipollina, M. (2010). Analysing tourism stakeholders' networks. *Tourism Review* 65(4), 17-30. 10.1108/16605371011093845

Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of network governance: Structure, management, and effectiveness. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18(2), 229–252. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum015>

Pärnu Maakond [Pärnu County]. (2020). Rahvastik [Population]. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from <https://vana.stat.ee/ppe-1167429>

Raab, J., & Kenis, P. (2009). Heading toward a society of networks: Empirical developments and theoretical challenges. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 18(3), 198-210. 10.1177/1056492609337493

Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Ringlebc, C. M., Jaafar, M., & Ramayahd, T. (2017). Urban vs. rural destinations: Residents' perceptions, community participation and support for tourism development. *Tourism Management* 60, 147-158. 10.1016/j.tourman.2016.11.019

Reagans, R., & McEvily, B. (2003). Network Structure and Knowledge Transfer: The Effects of Cohesion and Range. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 48(2), 240-267. doi:10.2307/3556658

Ren, C. (2010). Assembling the socio-material destination: An actor-network approach to cultural tourism studies. In G, Richards & W, Munsters. (Eds.), *Cultural Tourism Research Methods*. Oxfordshire, UK & Cambridge, USA: CABI, 199-208.

- Rodger, K., Moore, S, A., Newsome, D. (2009). WILDLIFE TOURISM, SCIENCE AND ACTOR NETWORK THEORY. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(4).
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2009.06.001>.
- Saxena, G., Clark, G., Oliver, T., & Ilbery, B. (2007). Conceptualizing integrated rural tourism. *Tourism Geographies* 9(4), 347-370. 10.1080/14616680701647527
- Scott, N., Baggio, R., & Cooper, C. (2008). *Network analysis and tourism from theory to practice. Aspects of tourism*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Siseministeerium [Ministry of the Interior]. (2014). Eesti regionaalarengu strateegia 2014-2020 [Estonian Regional Development Strategy 2014-2020]. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from https://www.siseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/dokumentid/eesti_regionaalarengu_strategia_2014-2020.pdf
- Skokic, V., Lynch, P., Morrison, A. (2019). Veza: An informal network of tourism entrepreneurs. *Annals of Tourism Research* 77, 26-37.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.05.004>.
- Statistics Estonia. (2018). TU110: Capacity of accommodation establishments, accommodated tourists and nights spent by county. Estonia: Statistics Estonia. Retrieved June 29, 2019, from <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TU110>
- Statistics Estonia. (2020). TU132: Accommodated tourists and nights spent by county and purpose of trip (months). Retrieved November 22 , 2020, from <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?lang=et&DataSetCode=TU132>
- Teng, B., & Das, T. (2008). Governance structure choice in strategic alliances: The roles of alliance objectives, alliance management experience, and international partners. *Management Decision* 46(5), 725-742. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740810873482>
- Timur, S., & Getz, D. (2008). A network perspective on managing stakeholders for sustainable urban tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 20(4), 445-461. 10.1108/09596110810873543

- Tinsley, R., & Lynch, P. (2001). Small tourism business networks and destination development. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 20(4), 367-378. 10.1016/S0278-4319(01)00024-X
- Tremblay, P. (1998). The economic organization of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 25(4), 837-859. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(98\)00028-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(98)00028-0)
- Unwin, T. (1996). Tourist development in Estonia: Images, sustainability, and integrated rural development. *Tourism Management* 17(4), 265-276. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(96\)00018-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(96)00018-0)
- Van der Duim, R. (2007). Tourismscapes an actor-network perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research* 34(4), 961–976. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2007.05.008>
- Van der Zee, E., Gerrets, A. M., & Vanneste, D. (2017). Complexity in the governance of tourism networks: Balancing between external pressure and internal expectations. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 6, 296-308. 10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.07.003
- Vicsek, L., Kiraly, G., & Konya, H. (2016). Networks in the social sciences: Comparing actor-network theory and social network analysis. *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 7(2), 77–102. 10.14267/CJSSP.2016.02.04
- Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994). *Social network analysis: Methods and applications*, 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wellman, B. (1988). Structural analysis: From method and metaphor to theory and substance. In B. Wellman & S. D. Berkowitz (Eds.), *Social structures a network approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19–61.
- Wickramasinghe, N., & Bali, R. K. (2009). The S'ANT imperative for realizing the vision of healthcare network centric operations. *International Journal of Actor-Network Theory and Technological Innovation (IJANTTI)* 1(1), 45–58. 10.4018/jantti.2009010103

Wood, D. J., & Gray, B. (1991). Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 27(2), 139-162. 10.1177/0021886391272001

WONDIRAD, A., Tolkach, D., King, B. (2020). Stakeholder collaboration as a major factor for sustainable ecotourism development in developing countries. *Tourism Management* 78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104024>.



Woolcock, M. 1998 Social capital and economic development: towards a theoretical synthesis and policy framework. *Theory and Society* 27(2), 151-208.
10.1023/A:1006884930135

Yilmaz, K. 2013. Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions: epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education* 48(2), 311–325.



Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Creating shared collaborative tourism identity in a post-communist environment. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2021.1893214>

Creating shared collaborative tourism identity in a post-communist environment

T. Pilving ^{a,b}, T. Kull^b, M. Suškevičs ^b and A. H. Viira^a

^aThe Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia; ^bInstitute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia

ABSTRACT



Collaboration is important for fostering tourism in a region and the creation of a shared collaborative identity facilitates this process. This paper explains the role of individual identities in the process of creating a shared tourism collaborative identity in a post-communist environment. To this end, it uses multi-grounded theory to analyse 37 individual interviews and 1 focus group interview conducted in 2 tourist destinations in Estonia. In the constantly evolving post-communist tourism environment, collaborative identity creation relates to self-construction at the individual, interpersonal, and group levels. This study shows that the place, occupational, cultural, and environmental identities in a given place shape and form shared tourism collaborative identities; however, a collaborative platform is required for shared collaborative identity creation. Specifically, during the shared collaborative identity creation, stakeholders bring their own identities to the process through the platform, on which individual and collective identities interact. The platform magnifies or weakens the perceptions of the shared collaborative identity. As collaboration broadens, the platform shifts from a small group to bigger groups. Nonetheless, during this the shared tourism collaborative identity creation is vulnerable, as stakeholders may perceive threats to their individual identities.

KEYWORDS

Shared collaborative tourism identity; social identity theory; multi-grounded theory; post-communist environment; collaborative platform

Introduction

The development of tourist regions requires collaboration between diverse stakeholders with different social and cultural backgrounds (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). The shared collaborative identities are created during collaborative processes (Öberg, 2016). According to Beech and Huxham (2003), identity forms through interactions in complex cycles, wherein individuals distinguish between their own identities and the identities of others. Through the connections that individuals have in different relationships (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Stryker, 1968) and the choices of individuals embedded in

CONTACT T. Pilving  tarmo.pilving@emu.ee  The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Kreutzwaldi 1a, 51006, Tartu, Estonia Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Kreutzwaldi 1a, 51006, Tartu, Estonia

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

the social structure (Stets & Biga, 2003), individual identities shape collaborative identities.

Collaborative identities are not always easily perceivable. The formalisation of collaboration helps one perceive a shared collaborative identity and might thus enhance the sustainability of collaboration (Öberg, 2016; Stets & Biga, 2003). Regardless of the formality level, the collaborative relationships between stakeholders can be facilitated on a collaborative platform that could be regarded “as organisations or programs with dedicated competences and resources for facilitating the creation, adaptation and success of multiple or ongoing collaborative projects or networks” (Ansell & Gash, 2018, p. 16). Thus collaborative platforms could have an important role in collaborative identity creation.

Diversity of stakeholders in tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 2000) renders the creation of shared collaborative identities a challenge. Tourism development can also affect the identities of local stakeholders (Segrestin, 2005). When stakeholders do not identify with the aims of regional tourism (Palmer et al., 2013) and perceive their identities to be under threat (Mason & Cheyne, 2000), separatism may occur that hinders collaboration (Kelliher et al., 2018).

Thus shared collaborative identity is one of the key determinants of collaboration success. Öberg (2016) studied how different collective identities influence each other and collaborative identity. However, it is not known how various individual identities of tourism stakeholders form the shared collaborative identity. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explain how individual identities relate to shared collaborative identities and the role of collaboration platform in this process. The paper answers the following research questions: (1) how individual identities relate with the shared collaboration identity and (2) how the shared collaboration identity is perceived by the stakeholders and facilitated in a post-communist tourism environment?

While established tourist regions are successful in capitalising on their tourism potential, post-communist regions lag (Cottrell & Raadik-Cottrell, 2015) because of insufficient collaboration due to low trust levels between stakeholders (Czakon & Czernek, 2016; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). Decades of centrally planned economy inhibited the development of local identities (Bożętko, 2013; Czernek et al., 2017). During and after the post-communist transition, some communities performed better in finding a clear development path than others (Annist, 2011). This makes fostering collaboration a challenging task because in post-communist environments, the differences in the individual identities of residents could be more accentuated than in regions with stable development.

This study was conducted in the Pärnu and Lahemaa regions in Estonia. The Pärnu region is known for its coastline and spa hotels, being one of the main tourist hotspots in Estonia. Lahemaa National Park (LNP) situated close to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia is the oldest and biggest national park in Estonia. These regions were selected to study the creation of shared collaborative identity because of differences in their size, imagery, and collaboration history.

Individuals find meaning and define themselves through their relationships with others and through their social identities. Social identity theory (SIT) distinguishes between individual, interpersonal, and collective self-creation. Individuals have multiple selves and part of a person's concept of self stems from the different groups to which that person relates to. A certain group to which an individual belongs, and which

manifests that individual's self-perception is considered an ingroup for that person. The other groups to which the individuals can compare themselves to but does not identify with are outgroups. This creates an "us" & "them" effect (Islam, 2014; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In tourism research, SIT has been used for explaining the relationship between residents' place-based social identity and their support for tourism (Wang et al., 2014), how tourism creates a place identity (Liu & Cheng, 2016), and the relationship between the mental stages experienced by event visitors (Chiang et al., 2017).

This study draws on SIT and uses multi-grounded theory (MGT) (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010) to explain shared collaborative identity creation. The grounded theory (GT) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is widely used in different scientific fields where new in-depth insights are necessary. It is a widespread approach for empirically based theory development where categories are inductively generated from empirical qualitative data. The main weakness of GT is the reluctance to use existing theories, which can lead to a knowledge loss. MGT is an alternative approach to GT that allows to synthesise existing theories and new data with theoretical, empirical, and internal grounding and develop or complement a theory bypassing the weakness of GT (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

Literature review

Collaboration in tourism

Collaboration "occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain" (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 146). Tourism collaboration is related with embeddedness where non-economic institutions influence economic activities (Granovetter, 1985). Czernek-Marszałek (2020) showed that when entrepreneurs are socially embedded, entrepreneurial and personal relationships overlap which helped to achieve collaboration success.

Networks are considered highly important in tourism context (Ness et al., 2018). Through collaboration, stakeholders form a network where nodes (e.g. groups and individuals) and ties (e.g. communication, agreements, and relationships) (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) connect different actors. Actors relate to each other via different ties: similarities (membership, attitude, or location); social relations (friendship or acquaintance); interactions (trade) and flows (recourses or information) (Borgatti et al., 2009), and thereby influence networking with their position, decisions, behaviour, or attitudes (Fyall et al., 2012). Both, strong and weak ties between the actors are valuable for networking (Houghton et al., 2009). Stakeholder relationships are also influenced by interdependence (Czakov & Czernek, 2016).

Stakeholders may have different reasons for collaborating, such as business development (Öberg, 2016), access to resources that are otherwise unavailable (Czakov & Czernek, 2016), and socialising with others (Pilving et al., 2019).

Previous literature on collaboration problems in post-communist environments has scrutinized determinants of collaborative success, the role of trust and conflicts between stakeholders. Czakov and Czernek (2016) found that it is difficult to develop calculative, capability-based, and intention-based trust, and showed the importance of third party-legitimation in the tourism network in the stakeholders' decision to enter network

coopetition. Several studies (Czernek, 2013; Czernek et al., 2017; Roberts & Simpson, 2000) have addressed economic, socio-cultural, demographic, legal, political, and spatial factors, and trust as determinants of collaboration success. Conflict over tourism development often arises between interested parties because of their different aims, and better-quality collaboration helps to reduce the number of conflicts (Kapera, 2018). Some studies (Strzelecka et al., 2017; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015) have demonstrated how residents' perceptions of place identity and bonding with the nature affect the perceptions of being empowered through tourism.

High seasonality, under which stakeholders often simultaneously have several different occupations to sustain their living throughout the year (Pilving et al., 2019), renders the Estonian tourism environment complex from the stakeholder perspective. This can influence stakeholders' self-efficacy and entrepreneurial abilities. Thus involvement in collaborative activities and the development of social networks (Hallak et al., 2012) may enhance entrepreneurial success (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016). In the countryside, tourism collaboration projects funded by the EU through LEADER local action groups have helped to bring together different actors, formal and informal tourism networks, and local governance entities (Pilving et al., 2019; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). However, the success of these initiatives depends on the competences of their leaders (Czernek, 2013).

The role of identity in tourism collaboration

Stets and Biga (2003) define identity as "a set of meanings attached to the self that serves as a standard or reference that guides behaviour in situations" (p. 401). Identity is a complex evolutionary phenomenon, constituted by individuals and collectives, and it relates to the past, present, and future (Hall, 1996). It is concurrently persistent and fragile, exists at several levels, can be described from individual, group, cultural, and spatial perspectives (Bożętko, 2013), and binds the individual to his or her surroundings (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Individual identity relates to one's personality and sense of self, together with connections to the social world that influence individual awareness and self-perception (Haj-Yehia & Erez, 2018).

An individual's public self consists of evaluations of oneself and of relevant others and includes self-cognitions that reflect relationships with others. The individual self-concept is based on individual perceptions of salient interpersonal relationships. Individual's social selves can exist: (i) through interpersonal relationships with other individuals and (ii) through interpersonal collective relationships. A collective identity develops when an individual has a sense of belonging to a certain group and when the group identity becomes part of that individual's identity. A social group consists of more than two people who share the same identity and relate to different outgroups in the same way (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

According to SIT, individual social selves are derived from interpersonal relationships (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) inside a relatively small group of people with common views (Prentice et al., 1994). Individuals can simultaneously have different identities depending on their positions in society and the social networks to which they belong (Stryker & Burke, 2000). A better understanding of the changes in the identities of individuals helps one comprehend decision making in different social situations (Stets & Biga, 2003), such as shared collaborative identity creation.

Several studies have addressed the interaction between individual and organisational identities in the process of identity construction for better collaboration (Daskalaki, 2010; Kohlamäki et al., 2016; Tomlinson, 2008). Identities are constantly changing, but sometimes this change will stop for some period. Then the identities will become deeply rooted and are difficult to change (Beech & Huxham, 2003).

Tourism plays an important role in local identities (Light, 2001) and can hasten regional cultural, social, and landscape changes (Božetka, 2013). However, identities can also construct, hinder, and influence tourism (Ballesteros & Ramirez, 2011; Palmer, 1999). In tourism context, local identity can be under threat by internal (growth of the heritage industry) and external factors (cultural change and devaluation of place meaning) (Božetka, 2013). Palmer et al. (2013) added that tourism marketing through images could be controversial with resident's identity.

Table 1. Overview of different identity conceptualisations.

Type of identity	Main perspectives
Place	Place identity describes relationships between people, the land, and surrounding areas (Davis, 2016) and the social practices in a particular place (Urry, 1990). One's sense of attachment and the attachment to a given place reflect both personal and social feelings (Hauge, 2007). Individual identity ascribed to an area can be cognitive, emotional, evaluative, or passive and manifests actively through interactions with visitors or the community (Palmer et al., 2013). Through the meaning of a place and community and stakeholder interactions, all involved actors mutually support each other and enhance the sustainability of tourism in a region (Hallak et al., 2012). For example, Davis (2016) showed how environments are created by festivals and Hallak et al. (2012) demonstrated that place identity of tourism entrepreneurs positively affects entrepreneurial self-efficacy, performance, entrepreneurial success and support for the community. Light (2001) found that using the sight (peoples palace) as a tourist attraction tries to reshape its past with the aim of fitting better with Romania's post-socialist identity. Cassinger et al. (2020) show that place branding is a very comprehensive process which brings together a large variety of stakeholders. In tourism, places are produced through visitor and commercial photography as a result, different understandings of the nature of the place may exist (Larsen, 2006). Different tourism activities can be an expression of place attachment (Schilar & Keskitalo, 2018).
Occupational	Occupational identity connects one's personal sense of identity to one's occupation (Carroll & Lee, 1990). In some cases (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Petzelka et al., 2006), resource-based occupational identity negatively influences an individual's support of tourism. For example, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) showed how different identities – the resource-based occupational identity, environmental identity, and gender identity of the community members influence their attitudes to tourism
Environmental	Environmental identity is "experienced social standing of who we are in relation to, and how we interact with the natural environment" (Weigert, 1997, p. 159). Environmental identity is formed by different meanings attached to a person through interactions with the surrounding natural environment (Stets & Biga, 2003). The common understanding of local natural values has a positive effect on regional tourism development (Haukeland et al., 2011). Tourism entrepreneurs can be emotionally tied to a natural environment (Schilar & Keskitalo, 2018). A local environment such as landscapes can be sensed through childhood memories (Raadik-Cottrell & Cottrell, 2015).
Cultural	Cultural identity forms when people from a community engage in behavioural practices and adopt certain worldviews (Shweder et al., 2006). Doorne et al. (2003) showed the extent to which cultural identities are constructed, traded and appropriated through and around material objects of touristic exchange in China. Pritchard and Morgan (2001) argue that repressive and liberating historical, political and cultural discourses can be found in the tourism branding strategies. Medina (2003) focussed on tourism and the representation of indigenous Maya identity where indigenous people who have lost their traditional skills look for new ways to find old knowledge. Culture is considered highly important for framing tourism events such as festivals (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009). In some destinations, international tourism can pose a threat to local cultural identity (Wray et al., 2010)
Collaborative	Collaborative identity refers to values and meanings shared by collaborative parties and their commitment to these values and collaboration (Öberg, 2016; Whetten, 2006). In shared collaborative identity construction, an individual is more likely to consider the values of a tourism organisation than the values of one's place of residence, the latter being more self-evident, and the individual has less control over them (Palmer et al., 2013)

The concepts of place, occupational, environmental, and cultural identities (Table 1) have been considered relevant to shared collaborative identity creation.

Individual agendas for taking part in collaboration are rather based on a person's identity than on the identity of the collaboration. The pre-collaboration history of stakeholders hinders the perceptions of collaborative identity (Öberg, 2016). In situations where certain control mechanisms (compromising the independence of groups or individuals) are created, shared identity construction can easily be dismissed and a more sporadic identity formation processes can take over (Bożętko, 2013). However, social activities in a group can help create a shared collaborative identity when stakeholders interpret things similarly (Weick, 1993). Especially, if the members of a certain group consider their leader highly prototypical, they identify well with that group (Hogg et al., 2004).

Changes in identities in post-communist Estonia

Estonia has undergone several major socio-economic changes (e.g. a communist regime, regaining independence, opening to western markets, and attaining a membership of the European Union) in recent decades, and these have shaped local identities. After the collapse of the command economy, tourism became an important vehicle of regional development and a means of earning income (Jaakson, 1996; Unwin, 1996; Worthington, 2001). When Estonia became a member of the European Union (2004), new investments precipitated the growth of tourism (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in Estonia, cooperatives and associations were the connecting structures, which helped to form national identity and feeling of belonging at the community and personal level. During the Soviet regime, this system collapsed, and new form of collaboration – collective farming – emerged in the rural areas. However, because of the scarcity of everyday supplies, an informal network of consumer acquaintances developed alongside the collective farms. After the collapse of the communist regime, the network of acquaintances quickly became obsolete, which created a gap in the collaborative relationships. The previous system disappeared, and new one was not yet established. In the 1990s, the rural areas in Estonia began to decline in the newly formed social hierarchy and acquired a negative image in society. This hindered the creation of new collaborations and external help was needed. During that time, several development programs started, which aimed to activate residents of rural communities. These programs were more successful in regions where residents had stronger place identity. The deprivation of some community groups, their fragmentation, inability to stand up for themselves, and the dwindling of social space are processes that have not been prevented by various formally inclusive schemes developed to build a community in the rural areas (Annist, 2011).

The situation is even more complex because younger and older generation identify themselves differently with the relation of the turbulent past (Martínez, 2018). During the transformation period in towns, events oriented to build nationality were replaced by wider cultural consumption. At the same time, in the rural environment, there were very few opportunities to create and express local identity through local culture. Even more general local identity did not have a clear positive cultural expression. Local officials tried to find places and features of local significance that would direct tourists towards them, but these were mainly natural attractions. In this environment, the level

of perception of a pervasive identity varies greatly from community to community (Annist, 2011). Consequently, the process of shared tourism collaboration identity creation in the post-communist regions is influenced by several complex aspects.

Methodology and data

Study areas

LNP is situated in northern Estonia, having a population of 3600 (2016) permanent residents. It was founded in 1971 to protect natural resources and cultural heritage. LNP is a popular natural holiday destination (Ausmeel et al., 2016), receiving 180,000 visitors each year (Karoles-Viia, 2018). Most tourism enterprises are micro-businesses that offer accommodation, food, or outdoor tourism services. Tourism is coordinated by local municipalities, the State Environmental Board, the State Forest Management Centre, and local initiatives. The region is characterised by natural landscapes, local maritime scenery, and a manor culture.

Broader issues of concern in the LNP are discussed within the Lahemaa Collaboration Assembly, which connects community members, local entrepreneurs, local municipalities, the Environmental Board, and the State Forest Management Centre. However, the Assembly does not focus strictly on tourism. The collaboration network Lahemaa Tourism Association provides collaborative platform in the form of different stakeholder gatherings and develops the shared collaborative identity.

The town of Pärnu and the surrounding rural area (in this study, they are considered one region) are situated in western Estonia and have a population of 83,000 (2016) residents (Statistics Estonia [ST], 2018b). Tourism in the area started in the nineteenth century, when the town of Pärnu was developed as a health resort. A modern sanatorium network was established after the Second World War, attracting visitors from across the Soviet Union. While at the time, summer house establishments attracted visits to the countryside (Kask, 2008), the region is still a popular summer holiday destination, with 778,000 accommodated visitors each year (2018) (Statistics Estonia [ST], 2020). The region includes several large spa hotels, while most tourism enterprises in the area are micro-businesses that offer accommodation, food, and outdoor activities. The region receives the second highest number of visitors in Estonia (Statistics Estonia [ST], 2018a) and is predominantly associated with spa and beach vacation.

In the Pärnu region, tourism collaboration between stakeholders is encouraged by local tourism organisation Visit Pärnu. Some large spa hotels from Pärnu town are members of non-profits Estonian Spa Association and Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association that represent their members' interests. In the countryside of the Pärnu region, collaborative activities are fostered by small local collaboration initiatives, Estonian Rural Tourism Association, and local LEADER action groups. Further, in the countryside of the Pärnu region a tourism network called Romantic Coastline (RC) has formed. The shared collaborative identity of this collaboration includes a trademark, café, and common imagery. The network engages local rural tourism enterprises, municipalities, and non-profits. The collaboration platform exists in the form of workshops, events, joint marketing, and festival network.

Data

Selective sampling under certain conditions (Flick, 2014) was used to find representative participants for the individual interviews in Pärnu region and focus group interview in the LNP region. Through official tourism information channels, a list of all tourism stakeholders in the study areas was created, together with information on their locations, tourism activities, and years active. The interviewees and focus group participants were required to operate in the tourism sector for longer and shorter periods, and to reflect the entire study region.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out between April 2017 and 2018 (sessions lasted from 45 min to 2 h). 37 individual interviews were conducted in the Pärnu region. In LNP, a focus group (with nine members) was conducted (Table 2). Majority of the interviewees were women over 40 years of age. Among the interviewees in the Pärnu region, there were five male and in the LNP two male entrepreneurs. All interviewees were residents of the study areas and lived there since birth or have returned to home communities after some time away. Almost all participants have additional occupations to tourism entrepreneurship in the fields of education, local municipality, LEADER local action group or some other local organisation. Majority of the interviewees are active in their home community.

As Pärnu region is large and consists of many different communities and destinations, individual interviews were chosen for data collection. LNP is compact and stakeholders have better connections; there, the focus group interview was used. The interview questions covered a wide range of issues related to tourism environments; development; collaboration and networking; individual behaviour in different collaboration situations; feeling of belonging to certain collaboration, region, or community; relations with different regional destinations; place attachment; and cultural, environmental, and occupational meanings.

Conceptual and methodological approach

This study applies MGT as a methodological approach. Previously, MGT has been used for studying complex issues such as business process theory (Lind & Goldkuhl, 2006) and social media marketing typology (Coursaris et al., 2013). In the multi-grounding process, emerging theories are related to empirical data and pre-existing theories (Figure 1). MGT allows to constantly refine the research aim and questions during the research process. Lind and Goldkuhl (2006) show that the research design can constantly change during the research because of the interplay between interim empirical and

Table 2. Overview of interviewees.

Field of operation	Pärnu (personal interviews)	Lahemaa National Park (focus group)
Active vacation activities	7	2
Accommodation	7	3
Food	2	1
Mixed	21	3
Years active		
1–5	3	3
5–15	16	4
More than 15	18	2

Theory development

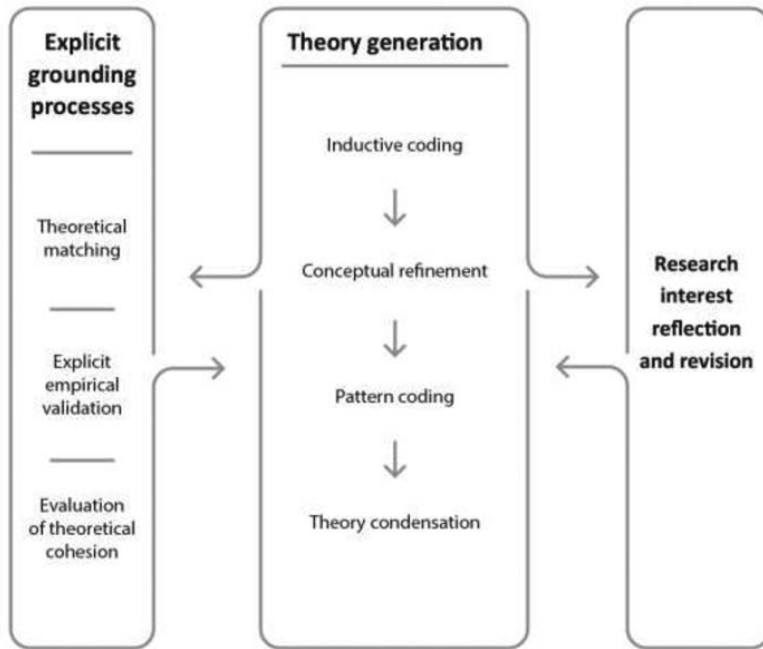


Figure 1. Working structure of the MGT (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

theoretical statements and different discoveries with repeated theoretical matching and empirical validation.

An example of the analysis process is shown in [Appendix 1](#) (not all codes are included in the annex as it would be too voluminous). Research process in the MGT framework consists of four steps ([Figure 1](#)). First, all data from the two study areas were transcribed and inductively coded. This phase is similar to open coding in GT. Data were coded as close to the text as possible, without any pre-conceptions to prevent the loss of emerging ideas and concepts. The primary categorisation of codes was done without any predetermined theoretical categorisations. In this phase, different meanings, themes, relationships, and connections (e.g. related to different identities, collaboration, socialisation, and levels of formality) started to emerge.

During the second analysis phase, conceptual refinement, all empirical statements and concepts from the first phase were challenged, critically examined, and assessed before the next categorisation ([Appendix 1](#)). During this phase, comparisons were also drawn between the codes, categories, and research notes taken during the interviews and different research stages.

In the third analysis phase (pattern coding), the assessed empirical statements (concepts after the inductive coding and conceptual refinement phases in [Appendix 1](#) were

compared to the existing theoretical concepts (Figure 1, main categories in Appendix 1) and a new set of categories (interim categories in Appendix 1) was created. During this phase, the SIT concepts, such as individual, interpersonal, and group self-construction, as well as the place, environmental, occupational, and cultural identity concepts previously addressed in tourism research (Table 1) were related to the codes and categories that emerged in the previous stages. In this phase, the different meanings related to individual and shared collaborative identities and the collaboration platform emerged.

Theory condensation is the final analysis phase of the MGT. It involved verifying the empirical, theoretical, and internal validity of emerging theoretical patterns and statements and comparing emerging and existing theoretical statements.

Strengths and weaknesses of MGT

MGT is a fairly novel methodological approach. So, there is still very little discussion regarding the actual advantages and disadvantages of its application. Some studies suggest that the main benefit of MGT relies upon its rigorousness and systematic approach; and that MGT allows to explain complex phenomena explicitly based on multiple sources of evidence (e.g. not only empirical data). Problematic aspects include, for instance, working with a too wide research question, or too widely described level of detail of MGT, which may not offer enough methodological support (Cronholm & Goldkuhl 2010; Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2018).

Results

Place, environmental, occupational, and cultural identities of stakeholders

Place identity

Figure 2 summarizes the findings of this study – the aspects that influence place, environmental, occupational, and cultural identities, and how the individual identities relate to and facilitate the creation of the shared collaborative identity through collaborative platform.

The interviews confirmed that the shared place identity of tourism stakeholders facilitates their collaboration and frames the scope of the shared collaborative identity. In the LNP, the shared collaborative identity is strongly related to the identity of the national park and to a home community, implying a strong connection between place and environmental identities. The stakeholders have interpersonal relationships and collaboration partners are, in most cases, residents of the national park.

If place identity is strong among tourism stakeholders, the outsiders could be perceived as a threat and left out from the collaborative networks. In the LNP, the broadening of collaboration is limited because tourism stakeholders from outside the LNP that offer services in the park are largely considered as intruders. Highlighted by local entrepreneur:

We do not want to collaborate with guides from abroad.

In border areas and far from regional centres, different tourism stakeholders can perceive place identity differently. This hinders the creation of a shared collaborative identity. An excerpt from the focus group interview (the LNP) highlights:

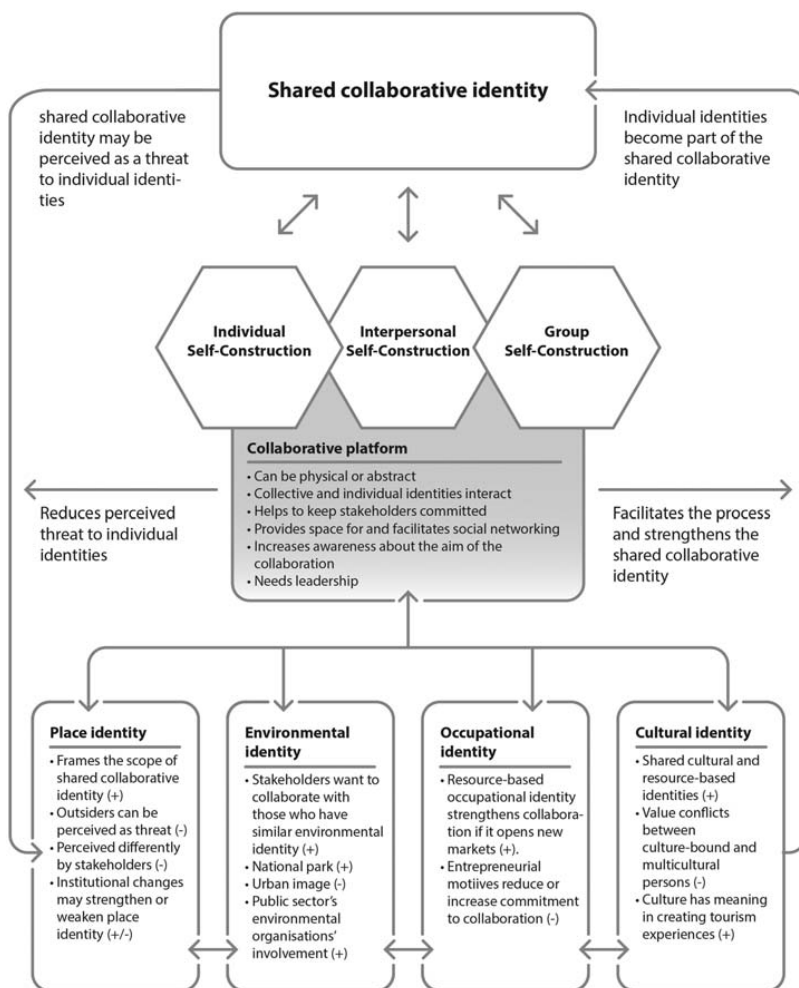


Figure 2. The process of shared collaborative identity creation in a post-communist tourism environment.

Stakeholders in the national park constantly argue about where the borders of the park actually are, and this confusion hinders collaboration.

The Pärnu region is much larger, more fragmented, and includes many different communities. Therefore, stakeholders can be confused in peripheral, municipal, and regional border areas where different collaboration networks overlap. For instance, two guest-houses, located close to each other at the periphery of the Pärnu region, are both in the scope of RC and Green Riverland collaboration networks, which have very different identities. The first is related to coastline, while the other relates to an inland bog area. Irrespective of their spatial proximity, the stakeholders of these networks do not

collaborate with each other because they identify themselves by different places. An interviewee from the RC network explains:

Our municipality locates on the borderline. Maybe it would be interesting to interview someone else from there on the forest side. They have some connection with the Green River-land, but I would rather stick here towards the coast.

The size of an area where tourism collaboration takes place impacts the collaboration. In larger regions, stakeholders might not be aware of the activities of other stakeholders, especially when they belong to different social groups. As explained by a tourism entrepreneur in Pärnu region:

I have seen at some events that there are canoeing people there. I did not even know.

These examples demonstrate how individual views regarding the borders of a place, inhabitants of the region, and stemming place identity of the stakeholders, but also the relationships between place, environmental and occupational identities frame the scope for shared collaborative identity in tourism.

The interviewees highlighted that the communist legacy and the impacts of institutional changes have shaped place and cultural identities. For example, EU accession (new investment opportunities through regional development funds, and new clients due to free movement of people in the EU) strengthened the feeling of belonging, as it provided more support to the traditional resource-based occupations and gave stakeholders opportunities to work closer to their homes in low season. However, the recent consolidation of local municipalities and the reform of administrative centres has weakened place identity. Highlighted by the entrepreneur:

The people who live here are active, they are unique, they live in a unique place ... they are already volunteering a lot. They have the motivation to do this, and if you take it away what do you voluntarily contribute then ... you don't want to do this all of your life, all the time, and contribute to it, if it's not yours ... it will lose the meaning for you.

Environmental identity

Shared environmental identity strengthens the collaboration between tourism stakeholders. Most of the interviewees highlighted that they want to collaborate with others who share the same views on environmental issues. In the LNP, the status of national park strengthens the environmental identity among stakeholders. An entrepreneur explains:

For some, forest is a living ecosystem, but for others it is a field of trees. This is a worldview conflict. For me it is easier if my collaboration partner shares the same values that I do.

However, some stakeholders from the LNP highlight that in the communist era they felt that living in national park restricted their freedom of action. This shows how institutional changes can either disallow or empower the way the stakeholders perceive the environmental identity and the stemming opportunities for tourism collaboration.

The situation is more multifaceted in Pärnu. The results indicate that the environmental identity of stakeholders is related to their field of operation and their location is not always the dominant factor. Several stakeholders based close to or in the town of

Pärnu do not identify their tourism activities with the spa-focused urban image, but rather with natural features of the surrounding countryside. One entrepreneur, who focuses on river tourism close to Pärnu town, explained:

My business is located at the border of Pärnu, which allows me to capitalise on the benefits of rural and urban settings. The town should focus more on new tourism experiences and not only on spa visitors. It is an old Hanseatic town with a lot of nature and a river. I will do everything in my power to promote this view of Pärnu as a sea, river, and fishing destination.

The results indicate that environmental identity plays a more significant role in shared collaborative identity creation when a public sector environmental organisation (e.g. Environmental Board) is involved in collaboration. Some of the interviewees argued that public sector participation introduces more difficulties between collaborative parties. However, others pointed out that, when tourism services are offered in environmentally sensitive regions, the participation of public sector organisations is extremely important to maintain environmental values intact. Argued in the focus group:

It is difficult to collaborate with the Environmental Board because their decision making is slow ... The Environmental Board has many concerns related with the increasing visitation in the national park and their strategy is to keep this under control.

Occupational identity

Due to the high seasonality of the tourism sector, many stakeholders have multiple sources of income, such as working for local organisations or engaging in different resource-based activities (fishing, forestry, and agriculture). Therefore, tourism stakeholders may have different occupational identities that they relate to, and that influence the creation of shared collaborative identity. The entrepreneurs who undertook resource-based activities were more open for tourism collaboration. An interviewee from Pärnu region explains:

We developed all these fairs to each municipality where artisans, farmers and fishermen collaborate.

Several stakeholders from the Pärnu region who coordinate the RC collaboration mentioned the time when collective farming ended and end of a golden age of resource-based occupations:

We had two fishing related collective farms and a great factory for smoking fish here. That's all gone now.

Another continues:

During the communist time everybody had cows in their yard. Last time I saw a cow in our village was almost 15 years ago.

Nowadays, the interviewees claimed that tourism provides them an opportunity to combine different occupations and provides access to a market for selling their resource-based products. As explained by a stakeholder from Pärnu:

Many locals collaborate with local tourism enterprises. For instance, we offer accommodation, but we do not have a store nearby, so we grow ourselves or buy everything from local

farmers. My husband is a fisherman, so we also offer smoked fish to our customers. The market where we can sell fish is far from us and tourism allows us to sell locally.

Collaborative tourism development helps local entrepreneurs to focus on one certain activity through which they form their occupational identity. An example explains:

She suddenly started with handicraft in 2013. She had a job in the Pärnu school and this year she quit. Because of the collaboration project she is doing well in the entrepreneurship.

Such stakeholders are primarily motivated to collaborate due to the need to sustain business activities for a certain period. When tourism collaboration is infrequent and based primarily on entrepreneurial motives, collaborative relationships are less sustainable, and perceptions of shared collaborative identity remain weak. Therefore, individual self-identification through different occupations (Figure 2) has differing effects on shared collaborative identity.

Cultural identity

Many stakeholders in the study areas find meaning in their tourism activities through cultural traditions related to a certain place and occupations (e.g. national park, traditional woodwork, fishing, local dialects, and handicrafts). Therefore, place, resource-based occupational and cultural identities are interconnected and enhance tourism collaboration and shared collaborative identity creation. An entrepreneur from Pärnu explains:

National handicraft and local fish dishes are our tradition and history. In addition to handicrafts, it is an excellent combination.

Stakeholders from both study areas highlight the failed efforts of the communist regime to reduce their involvement with the local culture. Nowadays, many stakeholders from both study areas use local culture as tourism experience. Interviewee from Kihnu island (Pärnu region) explains:

People come here to see our culture which is connected to our tourism services.

Strong shared cultural identity could create tensions between culture-bound and multicultural individuals and thereby hinder shared collaborative identity creation. Among the interviewees were individuals with both, cosmopolitan and more local, culture-bound views, but the representatives of both groups mentioned that local cultural values are recognised by their visitors through tourism. Nonetheless, the members of both groups believe that the visitor increase may negatively influence local values which could change their views.

Collaborative platform

On collaborative platform, collective and individual identities interact, shape the scope of collaboration, and create links through common bonds and identities for themselves and others for individual and collective gain. In Pärnu region, collaborative platforms can be identified as tourism networks that form around local LEADER groups. An example is RC collaboration. The leader of this project explains the role of collaborative platform in collaborative identity creation:

In all the presentations to the locals we talked about identity. We had a lot of fuss about the acceptance of this name because the concept of romance was difficult to explain. But the idea was to get people out of the house with their pies and handicrafts and form a collaboration network.

In LNP, the entity of national park itself can be identified as a collaborative platform. Highlighted by a local stakeholder:

We have one common denominator in all of our collaborative activities, and this is the park itself which relates to everything here.

Collaborative platform provides space for social networking, facilitates the creation, perception, and salience of shared collaborative identity, increases awareness about the aims of collaboration, and helps keep stakeholders committed. It can take material form in terms of tourism facilities (e.g. cafe or hiking trail), study trips, or events that raise the quality of visitor experience, increase competitiveness, and aggregate regional tourism offerings. The important common denominator is that this “place” brings stakeholders together. A stakeholder from the LNP explains:

Ideas must be developed together somehow. Otherwise, there will be such a feeling of scrambling encapsulated alone.

Results show that the shared collaborative identity creation needs a common level that facilitates the processes of interpersonal and group self-construction, so that individual identities become part of the shared collaborative identity. The collaborative platform is that level. Stakeholders from both study regions highlight that, for collaboration in their local communities, they need a place where they can meet friends and where they can socialise and meet people with whom they do not communicate daily. Socialising with others helps them feel as being a part of the collaboration. A stakeholder from the LNP focus group explains:

For collaborative projects, we need something that stakeholders can relate to. In our village, everything is related to our community centre. One day, we have business meetings there and the next day we hold a dance party. This place helps maintain our values and identity, builds trust between us and helps to achieve our collective aims.

Interviewees point out that a common level in collaboration helps them make sense and find better content and meaning for their own activities, also how they relate with others and how group of stakeholders forms during the collaborative activities. Through a collaboration platform individual, interpersonal and group self-construction takes place.

Shared collaborative identity creation

The representative of RC collaboration explains what they try to achieve through collaborative identity:

A visitor starts to travel in this region and sees that there is a sign of that collaboration. The traveller sees that sign here and there, which already has created positive experiences a couple of times. Then the traveller wants to go to the third or fourth place, because there may be something interesting there and through that, a person experiences this diversity offered in collaboration.

Interviewees highlight that when they aim to achieve something collectively with the collaboration, the interpersonal relationships they share with acquaintances help to achieve their aims. Especially, if there is a common understanding about place, occupational, environmental, and cultural meanings which leads to shared collaborative identity creation. This point is illustrated in the individual interviews and focus-group interview by the stakeholders involved in different collaborations:

I mostly collaborate with others who see things here as I do, and this helps us to create this collaborative body together.

I collaborate with them because we have a shared history and a similar understanding of almost everything around here.

We used to work together on a collaboration project, and we are former schoolmates, so we share a lot of history and I trust them.

Interviewees point out that the existence of shared identity helps understand their individual belonging and how they relate with others and with different groups in their local community. Reflections from other community members help individuals understand their place in the world, find meaning in their life, and construct their own identities. The interviewees also discussed how different groups are formed in the community and regions and what gives meaning to those groups. Different activities, such as handicrafts, fishing and surfing, organisational affiliation (public sector organisations and entrepreneurs), and age (younger and older stakeholders form different groups) help individuals to relate with others and share collaborative identity. Explained by a stakeholder from the RC collaboration:

We started from scratch and had to create content and gather what exists here locally. It cannot be said that there was nothing here, but it did not form a whole. I think we formed this whole at least to some extent. We have combined local food, festivals and other events and handicraft as well.

Stakeholders from both study areas highlight that during the shared collaborative identity creation process with the collaboration also starts to widen. Explained by the member of the RC:

We started with only a handful of people. But we contacted personally others as well and soon we included different groups to the collaboration. The peak was reached through the study trips where members of different communities got to know each other, and the collaboration began to raise interest abroad.

Local tourism leader from the LNP adds:

I know that this will be extremely difficult but for proper collaboration we have to unite diverse groups from different municipalities and maybe some outsiders too. With only couple of people, it will be difficult to achieve our aims.

However, when the stakeholders do not identify themselves with a large collaboration then they try to find alternatives. Explained by an entrepreneur from the RC collaboration:

During the years I could not relate properly with the RC and when it started to decelerate, we created a mini version of the RC in our community.

Example from the LNP:

The Lahemaa Collaboration Council is too slow collaboration form and difficult to deal with. We need more focussed, smaller and quicker solutions.

Discussion

The relationship between individual identities and shared collaborative tourism identity

Post-communist environment

In understanding the creation of shared collaborative identity, it is important to consider the changes that have shaped the post-communist tourism environment in Estonia. Bichler and Lösch (2019) highlight the role of institutional support for tourist destinations and the transformation of the institutions responsible for tourism development. Changes in the leadership and decrease in trust levels have a major impact on collaborations. In Estonia, these changes have occurred relatively abruptly and left their mark on both study regions (Figure 2). A similar situation was noted in Poland, where the underdeveloped society, lack of experience, and financial problems have negatively influenced tourism collaboration (Czernek, 2013). In the study regions, communist time and turbulent transition period are part of stakeholder's and local identity. Older interviewees compared recent municipal reform with the merger of collective farms in the communist time. Strzelecka and Wicks (2015) argue that after World War II in Poland many families moved far from home to work in collective farms, which limited their attachment with locals and caused a weak regional identity. In Estonia, the population declined drastically during the WW II and Soviet regime, which reduced people's sense of belonging (Annist, 2011).

The stakeholders from LNP pointed out that the new laws that accompanied the creation of the national park in the Soviet time impacted their place attachment and restricted their freedom of action. Nowadays the limitations for the land use are still there but at the other hand the national park as an institution assures that the local culture and nature are preserved (Figure 2). Communist legacy is part of their regional identity as are the impacts of other major events that happened after restoring independence.

Some stakeholders are accompanied by the fear that shift of the local decision making to bigger municipalities will reduce the home feeling and separate community members. The stakeholders from Pärnu region are more concerned about the disappearance of locality than stakeholders from the LNP.

The results showed that, in Estonia, similarly to Poland, it was easier to start collaborative relationships with an individual than a group of stakeholders, especially when this group consists of strangers. In these conditions, people most likely identify themselves with their friends or acquaintances rather than with larger groups or structures. In the post-communist environment, the aging society can be a barrier to collaboration and younger people are more open minded to establishing collaborations (Czernek, 2013). Another hindering factor are the passive entrepreneurs who are not properly embedded in the local social structure which hinders the creation of long-term relationships and economic benefits (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020).

The role of individual identities

The results of this study confirm Cohen's (1985) suggestion that stakeholders who belong to one community form their own identities in the social space of their homes, while outsiders may be perceived as a threat to their identity. Institutional changes in post-communist Estonia manifest through low trust levels towards outsiders but can also influence stakeholder relationships inside a community. Uncertainty about the future reduces the level of belonging to a certain place or community. On one hand, tourism stakeholders want to achieve something in their home community (e.g. jointly owned shop, hiking trail or effective collaboration network) through collaboration and give back to the community, which strengthens their feeling of belonging to a certain place (Figure 2). Common understanding about the collaboration supports the shared identity creation (Soenen & Moingeon, 2002). On the other hand, they fear that their achievements can fall into the wrong hands through collaboration. If stakeholders' sense that the collaboration shifts away from their "place" and is controlled by others shared identity construction is compromising the independence of groups or individuals (Bożętko, 2013), shared collaborative identity creation will not succeed (Figure 2).

In the study areas, people and groups find meaning and identify themselves through several different tourism related occupations and activities. However, local fishermen, artisans, and surfers depend on tourists, and collaboration gives them the opportunity to diversify the local tourism supply and keep visitors longer in the community. Because of the interdependence between stakeholders (Czakoń & Czernek, 2016) shared collaborative identity is easy to achieve in this context, but the sustainability of this identity is questionable because stakeholders do not usually identify themselves as tourism entrepreneurs but through their occupations (Figure 2).

The national park status can be important to symbolise local natural values (Haukeland et al., 2011). In both study regions, a common understanding about local natural values unites stakeholders. As their environmental identity forms through these values (Stets & Biga, 2003), different understandings of natural values may divide local tourism stakeholders into different groups. Even if tourism is beneficial to the members of both groups, they identify themselves differently, which hinders the creation of shared collaborative identity. However, environmental issues can be complex and constantly debated without finding a common ground. The interpretation of things in similar ways (Weick, 1993) helps overcome such issues, as does a collaborative platform with the facilitation of public organisations (Figure 2).

The interviewees relate closely to work, nature and culture, and the processes of the direct individual, interpersonal, and group self-construction are continuously occurring during collaborations. From the tourism viewpoint, cultural identity is the most perceptible of these identities because interviewees use the local culture as tourist experience. As for environmental identity, cultural identity can also divide stakeholders into different groups and thus influence the creation of shared collaborative identity (Figure 2).

The creation of shared collaborative identity

In Estonia, local identity is considered increasingly important for the revitalisation of rural life especially for developing tourism (Annist, 2011). A shared collaborative identity can only be achieved when it relates to the individual identities of stakeholders (Figure 2).

According to SIT, throughout a collaboration process, self-construction is related to the collaborative activities at the personal (individuals), interpersonal (connections with important others), and group levels (social identity). In the process of shared collaboration identity creation, the focus shifts from “I” to “we” (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Stakeholders can identify themselves through a shared collaborative identity, as was the case with the RC. The opposite can also happen which shows the complexity of this phenomena. Öberg (2016) pointed out that company-level and collaboration-level identities can exist in symbiosis where some actors commit more to the collaboration and others to their own enterprises. However, in the collaboration setting they commit to their individual identities as well (Figure 2).

In tourism, collaboration with others can occur even without direct interpersonal communication, but such actions do not usually lead to shared collaborative identity creation because they remain anonymous and rather transactional than collaborative. Czernek (2013) argues that, in these conditions, trust between the stakeholders is low and stakeholders are not willing to collaborate.

Collaboration activates the creation of collective identity when the most salient components of the self are shared with other group members (Brewer, 1991). Cognitive, communicative, organisational, functional, social, cultural, and geographical distances influence collaboration (Czernek-Marszałek, 2019). Differences in identity also create distance between local stakeholders and, therefore, influence the creation of a shared collaborative identity (Figure 2).

European Union funded collaboration projects have received criticism (Shepherd & Ioannides, 2020). However, LEADER local action group can help to widen the social circle in a post-communist environment and unite different actor groups (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). Such a development also took place in Estonia. In the process of shared collaborative identity creation, different identities of the group and of individuals influence each other (Öberg, 2016) and group identities can be based on a collective identity or bonds between group members (Prentice et al., 1994). Broadening collaboration brings along a shift, where individuals in small groups that share close collaborative relationships start relationships with other groups. During the broadening phase, collaboration is shifting from the interpersonal level to the group level. Not all groups may be directly connected to tourism or to existing social networks, which makes the broadening process a challenge. These social groups also compete over status, prestige, and distinctiveness (Hogg et al., 2004) and, in the tourism context, consider how their identity affects others/visitors (Light, 2001).

According to SIT, individuals aim to reduce uncertainty about their place in the social world. They like to know their behaviour and the behaviours of others, which reduces uncertainty (Hogg et al., 2004). If uncertainty is not reduced during the shift from the interpersonal to the group level, shared collaborative identity creation is vulnerable because stakeholders can perceive threats to their individual identities (Figure 2). When this happens, the broadening process starts to change into other collaborative formations, where stakeholders feel a lower threat to their identities.

Two persons can be fond of each other because they share a common group identity. When members of a certain group feel sympathy towards each other, the behaviour towards outsiders at the group level can be pre-emptive, thus hindering the creation of shared collaborative identity. Personal attraction based on personal

identities and similar interests, attitudes, and values differs from social attraction, where ingroup members are preferred over outgroup members. Here, the entity of a certain group can be so important to a member who belongs to this group that group members are socially attractive to each other despite their dissimilarities. Even when group members do not like each other interpersonally, this type of attraction helps different groups to work together (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). This trend is eminent in both study regions.

According to SIT, the significance of social identity is high when individuals consider membership in a certain group to be central to their self-concept and have strong emotional ties with that group. Affiliation to a certain group helps confer self-esteem and sustain social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This study adds to SIT, in that if the collaborative identity creation at the group level moves away from or is not related with stakeholders' individual identities, the stakeholders lose interest in creating a shared collaborative identity and try to find alternative ways for collaboration.

Collaborative platform

The entity of the collaborative platform

Previously, in tourism research the discussion on platforms has focused mostly on the concept of innovation platform, which helps stakeholders to innovate and share knowledge through an open discussion (Lalicic, 2018). As communication is extremely important in tourism collaboration, digitally supported platforms can help stakeholders interact (Bichler & Lösch, 2019; Lindström, 2020). The collaborative platform proposed in this study (Figure 2) can have a virtual or physical (e.g. community centres or clubs) presence, the organisational presence or can manifest more abstractly through stakeholder interaction. Sometimes, all these elements are present and, therefore, the collaborative platform is not directly related to the size of a collaboration network or the aim of collaboration but is primarily characterised by the nature of stakeholder relationships (Figure 2).

The collaborative platform must offer a social networking element to stakeholders, serving as a communication and socialisation tool between stakeholders who work in different tourism fields and sectors, which helps to increase stakeholder's sense of belonging to a collaboration (Figure 2). This is especially needed when it is difficult to find consensus in collaborative decision making (Bichler & Lösch, 2019).

According to Brewer and Gardner (1996), "defining the individual's self-concept derives from comparisons between characteristics shared by in-group members in comparison to relevant outgroups" (p. 85). Awareness among stakeholders on the aims and relevance of collaboration helps create a mutual understanding of what place, occupational, environmental, and cultural identities mean to the different individuals who participate in collaborations. On the collaborative platform, the self and others interact, which starts the shared collaboration identity creation. This process initiates the identity perception at the personal, interpersonal, and group levels (Figure 2).

Shared collaborative identity creation through the collaborative platform

This study shows that informal collaborative relationships are established between few stakeholders with constantly changing levels of interdependency. The interdependency

in tourism collaboration is related with satisfying visitors' needs because most of the collaborations focus on joint offerings and visitor sharing. This indicates that the formation of a collaboration platform is related to the interdependency level among the collaboration partners and it should evolve through the interplay between formal and informal collaborative actions.

In both study regions, it is common that small-scale collaborations start to widen. This happens between different stakeholder groups who have different needs and roles (Czernek, 2013). The results indicate that informal collaborations between a few people can only grow to a certain point and do not necessarily create the collaborative platform required to form a shared collaborative identity. Collaboration without the collaboration platform indicates low interdependency between partners and, in this context, establishing lasting collaborative relationships is difficult because partners can find it easier to achieve their aims unilaterally (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

Usually, the reason for wider collaboration is the implementation of a regional tourism policy with the aim of unifying existing collaboration networks. Now, social selves derive from the membership in larger, more impersonal collectives or social categories and collective social identities do not require personal relationships among group members or a group identity based on common identities (Prentice et al., 1994). During this shift, the collaboration platform also changes because the collaboration now involves different groups of different sizes that cannot always relate with other groups because of identity differences (Figure 2).

Conclusion

This study explained the role of individual identities in the process of shared collaborative identity creation using SIT as theoretical basis and MGT as methodology. In the constantly evolving post-communist tourism environment, shared collaborative identity creation takes place on a collaboration platform, where stakeholders bring their own place, occupational, environmental, and cultural identities to the process.

As collaboration broadens, it shifts from a small group of people with close interpersonal relationships to other communities and regions, which include stakeholders not directly connected to the tourism region. In the shift from the interpersonal to the group level, shared collaborative identity creation is vulnerable, as stakeholders may perceive threats to their individual identities.

This study contributes to SIT by finding that stakeholders in post-communist tourism environment identify themselves with others to whom they share the same personal identities, and this helps to create shared collaborative identity at the group level.

Through shared collaborative identity creation place, environmental and cultural identity are collectively shared on a collaborative platform, where they are salient at an individual and interpersonal level. Occupational identity does not necessarily initiate collective sharing during shared collaborative identity creation but is still important for self-cognition and identifying with others involved in the collaboration. A collaborative platform thus creates common bonds and identities for oneself and others, which are needed for the collaborative identity and to keep stakeholders committed to the collaboration.

Such a platform increases or weakens the perceptions of shared collaborative identity and influences collaboration performance. While the essence of a collaborative platform

depends on the collaborative environment, it is crucial to offer a social networking element to stakeholders. For high levels of perceived shared collaborative identity and a well-established collaborative platform, collaboration is more resilient.

This study offers several new insights for tourism collaboration. The findings indicate that identity is a key element to determine the scope of collaboration between different individuals and groups. The differences in identities between partners make collaboration difficult. When stakeholders are not able to identify themselves with a shared collaborative identity, they will start looking for alternative collaborations.

Collaboration without a shared collaborative identity and collaboration platform indicates a low level of interdependency between the stakeholders, which hinders the creation of lasting collaborative relationships. Understanding the idea of the collaboration platform and the importance of shared collaborative identity helps regional tourism managers and policy makers understand how different individuals and groups relate to each other, build stronger stakeholder relationships, build trust and decrease threats, create a synergy between formal and informal collaboration, find proper channels for communication and socialisation with and between stakeholders, give meaning and sense the scope of the collaboration, and most importantly, not make an effort to foster collaboration between incompatible groups.

This study has certain limitations. In addition to the occupational, place, environmental, and cultural identities, other distinct individual identities (gender) can influence the creation of shared collaborative identity. Although, the MGT proved suitable for the study of this phenomenon, other methodologies may open new avenues in the study of shared collaborative identity. Further research could focus on larger, multi-stakeholder tourism areas, where cooperation is more formal. Another research direction refers to the leadership, governance, and managerial aspects related to shared collaborative identity creation.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank Estonian University of Life Sciences; and the Doctoral School of Economics and Innovation (Estonian University of Life Sciences ASTRA project Value-chain based bio-economy) for supporting publication of this paper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

T. Pilving  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8361-0431>

M. Suškevics  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5666-2623>

References

- Annist, A. (2011). *Seeking community in post-socialist centralised villages. A study in anthropology of development*. Tallinn University.

- Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2007). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum032>
- Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2018). Collaborative platforms as a governance strategy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 28(1), 16–32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mux030>
- Ausmeel, H., Jürgens, K., Kingumets, K., Mets, I., Niinemägi, L., Paulus, A., & Vildak, M. (2016). Lahemaa National Park. Estonia Environmental Board. Retrieved January 08, 2019, from https://www.keskkonnaamet.ee/sites/default/public/Lahemaa_EN.pdf
- Ballesteros, E. R., & Ramirez, H. R. (2011). Identity and community–Reflections on the development of mining heritage tourism in southern Spain. *Tourism Management*, 28(3), 677–687. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.03.001>
- Beech, N., & Huxham, C. (2003). Cycles of identity formation in interorganizational collaboration. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 33(3), 28–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.2003.11043686>
- Bichler, B. F., & Lösch, M. (2019). Collaborative governance in tourism: Empirical insights into a community-oriented destination. *Sustainability*, 11(23), 6673. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11236673>
- Borgatti, S. P., Mehra, A., Brass, D., & Labianca, G. (2009). Network analysis in the social sciences. *Science*, 323(5916), 892–895. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1165821>
- Bożętko, B. (2013). Wolin island, tourism and conceptions of identity. *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, 2(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.imic.2013.03.001>
- Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2000). Collaboration and partnerships in tourism planning. In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: Politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 230–246). Channel View Publications.
- Bredvold, R., & Skalen, P. (2016). Lifestyle entrepreneurs and their identity construction: A study of the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 56, 96–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.03.023>
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(5), 475–482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167291175001>
- Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this “We”? levels of collective identity and self-representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(1), 83–93. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.1.83>
- Carroll, M. S., & Lee, R. G. (1990). Occupational community and identity among pacific north-western loggers: Implications for adapting to economic changes. In R. G. Lee, D. R. Field, & W. R. Burch (Eds.), *Community and forestry: Continuities in the sociology of natural resources* (pp. 141–155). Westview Press.
- Cassinger, C., Gyimóthy, S., & Lucarelli, A. (2020). 20 years of Nordic place branding research: A review and future research agenda. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2020.1830434>
- Chiang, L., Xu, A., Kim, J., Tang, L. R., & Manthiou, A. (2017). Investigating festivals and events as social gatherings: The application of social identity theory. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(6), 779–792. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2016.1233927>
- Cohen, A. P. (1985). *The symbolic construction of the community*. Routledge.
- Cottrell, S., & Raadik-Cottrell, J. (2015). Editorial: The state of tourism in the Baltics [special issue]. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(4), 321–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2015.1081798>
- Coursaris, C. K., Van Osch, W., & Balogh, B. A. (2013). A social media Marketing typology: Classifying brand Facebook page messages for strategic consumer engagement. *ECIS 2013 Completed Research*, 46, https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2013_cr/46
- Cronholm, S., & Goldkuhl, G. (2010). Adding theoretical grounding to grounded theory: Toward multi-grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9(2), 187–205. [10.1177/160940691000900205](https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691000900205)
- Czakon, W., & Czernek, K. (2016). The role of trust-building mechanisms in entering into network cooptation: The case of tourism networks in Poland. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 57, 64–74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2016.05.010>

- Czernek-Marszałek, K. (2019). Distance dimensions and their impact on business cooperation in a tourist destination. *Research Papers of Wrocław University of Economics*, 63(7), <https://doi.org/10.15611/pn.2019.7.17>
- Czernek-Marszałek, K. (2020). Social embeddedness and its benefits for cooperation in a tourism destination. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 15, Article 100401. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2019.100401>
- Czernek, K. (2013). Determinants of cooperation in a tourist region. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 40, 83–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2012.09.003>
- Czernek, K., Czakon, W., & Marzsalek, P. (2017). Trust and formal contracts: Complements or substitutes? A study of tourism collaboration in Poland. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6(4), 318–326. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.07.001>
- Daskalaki, M. (2010). Building “bonds” and “bridges”: Linking tie evolution and network identity in the creative industries. *Organization Studies*, 31(12), 1649–1666. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840610380805>
- Davis, A. (2016). Experiential places or places of experience? Place identity and place attachment as mechanisms for creating festival environment. *Tourism Management*, 55, 49–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.01.006>
- Doorne, S., Ateljevic, I., & Bai, Z. (2003). Representing identities through tourism: Encounters of ethnic minorities in Dali, Yunnan province, People's Republic of China. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 5(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.404>
- Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research (5th ed.)*. Sage.
- Fyall, A., Garrod, B., & Wang, Y. (2012). Destination collaboration: A critical review of theoretical approaches to a multi-dimensional phenomenon. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1–2), 10–26. [10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.10.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.10.002)
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine.
- Goldkuhl, G., & Cronholm, S. (2018). Multi-grounded theory: An update. *The International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918795540>
- Granovetter, M. S. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91, 481–510. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2780199>
- Haj-Yehia, K., & Erez, M. (2018). The impact of the ERASMUS program on cultural identity: A case study of an Arab Muslim female student from Israel. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 70, 32–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2018.08.001>
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs identity? In S. Hall, & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1–17). Sage.
- Hallak, R., Brown, G., & Lindsay, N. J. (2012). The place identity-performance relationship among tourism entrepreneurs: A structural equation modelling analysis. *Tourism Management*, 33(1), 143–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.02.013>
- Hauge, ÅL. (2007). Identity and place: A critical comparison of three identity theories. *Architectural Science Review*, 50(1), 44–51. <https://doi.org/10.3763/asre.2007.5007>
- Haukeland, J. V., Daugstad, K., & Vistad, O. I. (2011). Harmony or conflict? A focus group study on traditional use and tourism development in and around Rondane and Jotunheimen National Parks in Norway. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 11(1), 13–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2011.632597>
- Hogg, M. A., Abrams, D., Otten, S., & Hinkle, S. (2004). The social identity perspective: Intergroup relations, self-conception, and small groups. *Small Group Research*, 35(3), 246–276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496404263424>
- Houghton, S., Smith, A., & Hood, J. (2009). The influence of social capital on strategic choice: An examination of the effects of external and internal networks relationships on strategic complexity. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(12), 1255–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.01.002>
- Islam, G. (2014). Social identity theory. In T. Teo (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of critical psychology* (pp. 1781–1783). Springer.
- Jaakson, R. (1996). Tourism in transition in post-soviet Estonia. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(3), 617–634. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(95\)00113-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(95)00113-1)

- Jaeger, K., & Mykletun, R. J. (2009). The festivalscape of finnmark. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 9(2-3), 327–348. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250903119520>
- Jarvis, J., & Kallas, P. (2008). Estonian tourism and the accession effect: The impact of European Union membership on the contemporary development patterns of the Estonian tourism industry. *Tourism Geographies. An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment*, 10(4), 474–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616680802434080>
- Kapera, I. (2018). Sustainable tourism development efforts by local governments in Poland. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 40, 581–588. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2018.05.001>
- Karoles-Viia, K. (2018). Külastajaseire riigimetsa majandamise keskuses [Visitor monitoring in the national forest management]. Retrieved February 18, 2019, from http://pk.emu.ee/userfiles/instituudid/pk/file/PKI/loodusturismikonv/KERLI_KAROLES_VIIA_RMK_Kulastajaseire_%2013_03_2018_7.pdf
- Kask, T. (2008). The development of Pärnu Resort. Retrieved December 18, 2018, from <http://resort175.weebly.com/resort.html>
- Kelliher, F., Reinla, L., Johnson, T. G., & Joppe, M. (2018). The role of trust in building rural tourism micro firm network engagement: A multi-case study. *Tourism Management*, 68, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.02.014>
- Kohlamäki, M., Thorgren, S., & Wincnet, J. (2016). Organizational identity and behaviours in strategic networks. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 31(1), 36–46. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-07-2014-0141>
- Lalicic, L. (2018). Open innovation platforms in tourism: How do stakeholders engage and reach consensus? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(6), 2517–2536. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2016-0233>
- Larsen, J. (2006). Picturing Bornholm: Producing and consuming a tourist place through picturing practices. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 6(2), 75–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250600658853>
- Light, D. (2001). "Facing the future": Tourism and identity-building in post-socialist Romania. *Political Geography*, 20(8), 1053–1074. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(01\)00044-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00044-0)
- Lind, M., & Goldkuhl, G. (2006). How to develop a multi-grounded theory: The evolution of a business process theory. *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, 13(2), <https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v13i2.41>
- Lindström, K. N. (2020). Ambivalence in the evolution of a community-based tourism sharing concept: A public governance approach. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 20(3), 302–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2020.1786455>
- Liu, Y., & Cheng, J. (2016). Place identity: How tourism changes our destination. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 8(2), 76–85. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v8n2p76>
- Martínez, F. (2018). *Remains of the Soviet past in Estonia: An anthropology of forgetting, repair and urban traces*. UCL Press.
- Mason, P., & Cheyne, J. (2000). Residents' attitudes to proposed tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(2), 391–411. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00084-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00084-5)
- Medina, K. L. (2003). Commoditizing culture. Tourism and Maya identity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(2), 353–368. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(02\)00099-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(02)00099-3)
- Ness, H., Fuglsang, L., & Eid, D. (2018). Editorial: Networks, dynamics, and innovation in the tourism industry. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 18(3), 225–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2018.1522719>
- Nunkoo, R., & Gursay, D. (2012). Residents' support for tourism: An identity perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(1), 243–268. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.05.006>
- Öberg, C. (2016). What creates a collaboration level identity? *Journal of Business Research*, 69(9), 3220–3230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.02.027>
- Palmer, C. (1999). Tourism and the symbols of identity. *Tourism Management*, 20(3), 313–321. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(98\)00120-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(98)00120-4)
- Palmer, A., Koenig-Lewis, N., & Jones, L. E. M. (2013). The effects of residents' social identity and involvement on their advocacy of incoming tourism. *Tourism Management*, 38, 142–151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.02.019>

- Petrzelka, P., Krannich, R. S., & Brehm, J. M. (2006). Identification with resource-based occupations and desire for tourism: Are the two necessarily inconsistent? *Society and Natural Resources*, 19 (8), 693–707. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920600801108>
- Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2019). The tourism partnership life cycle in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 219–230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>
- Prentice, D., Miller, D., & Lightdale, J. (1994). Asymmetries in attachments to groups and to their members: Distinguishing between common-identity and common-bond groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(5), 484–493. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167294205005>
- Pritchard, A., & Morgan, N. (2001). Culture, identity and tourism representation: Marketing Cymru or Wales? *Tourism Management*, 22(2), 167–179. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(00\)00047-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00047-9)
- Raadik-Cottrell, J., & Cottrell, S. P. (2015). Sense-of-Place influences on perceived environmental change: Effects on future holiday experiences to Saaremaa, Estonia. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(4), 425–446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2015.1024820>
- Roberts, L., & Simpson, F. (2000). Developing partnership approaches to tourism in central and Eastern Europe. In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: Politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 230–246). Channel View Publications.
- Schilar, H., & Keskitalo, E. C. H. (2018). Tourism activity as an expression of place attachment—place perceptions among tourism actors in the jukkasjärvi area of northern Sweden. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 18(sup1), S42–S59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2017.1389123>
- Segrestin, B. (2005). Partnering to explore: The Renault–Nissan alliance as a forerunner of new cooperative patterns. *Research Policy*, 34(5), 657–672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2005.02.006>
- Shepherd, J., & Ioannides, D. (2020). Useful funds, disappointing framework: Tourism stakeholder experiences of INTERREG. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 20(5), 485–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2020.1792339>
- Shweder, R. A., Goodnow, J. J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R. A., Markus, H. R., & Miller, P. J. (2006). The cultural psychology of development: One mind, many mentalities. In R. M. Lerner, & W. Damon (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 716–792). John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Soenen, G., & Moingeon, B. (2002). The five facets of collective identities. Integrating corporate and organizational identity. In B. Moingeon, & G. Soenen (Eds.), *Corporate and organizational identities: Integrating strategy, marketing, communication and organizational perspectives*. Routledge.
- Statistics Estonia. (2018a). TU110: Capacity of accommodation establishments, accommodated tourists and nights spent by county. Retrieved July 10, 2018, from <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TU110>
- Statistics Estonia. (2018b). RV0213: Components of change in population figure by county. Retrieved July 15, 2018, from <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?lang=en>
- Statistics Estonia. (2020). TU132: Accommodated tourists and nights spent by county and purpose of trip (months). Retrieved January 21, 2020, from <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?lang=et&DataSetCode=TU132>
- Stets, J. E., & Biga, C. F. (2003). Bringing identity theory into environmental sociology. *Sociological Theory*, 21(4), 398–423. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1467-9558.2003.00196.x>
- Stryker, S. (1968). Identity salience and role performance. The importance of symbolic interaction theory for family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30(4), 558–564. <https://doi.org/10.2307/349494>
- Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present and future of identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(4), 284–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2695840>
- Strzelecka, M., Boley, B. B., & Woosnam, K. M. (2017). Place attachment and empowerment: Do residents need to be attached to be empowered? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 66, 61–73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2017.06.002>
- Strzelecka, M., & Wicks, B. E. (2015). Community participation and empowerment in rural post-communist societies: Lessons from the leader approach in Pomerania. *Poland. Tourism Planning & Development*, 12(4), 381–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1013564>

- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of social conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- Tomlinson, F. (2008). Positioning acts and identity effects: Constructing identities for organizations in partnership. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 31(9), 1003–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900690801923936>
- Unwin, T. (1996). Tourist development in Estonia: Images, sustainability, and integrated rural development. *Tourism Management*, 17(4), 265–276. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(96\)00018-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(96)00018-0)
- Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze and the "environment"*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327692009003001>.
- Wang, S., Zhou, L., Lee, S., & King, C. (2014). Analysis of residents' social identity, tourism engagement, and propensity for tourism advocacy. In J. S. Chen (Ed.), *Advances in hospitality and leisure: Vol. 10* (pp. 109–129). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994). *Social network analysis: Methods and applications*, 8. Cambridge University Press.
- Weick, K. E. (1993). The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(4), 628–652. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393339>
- Weigert, A. J. (1997). *Self, interaction and the natural environment: Refocusing our eyesight*. SUNY Press.
- Whetten, D. A. (2006). Albert and Whetten revisited. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(3), 219–234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492606291200>
- Wood, D. J., & Gray, B. (1991). Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 27(2), 139–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886391272001>
- Worthington, B. (2001). Riding the "J" curve—tourism and successful transition in Estonia? *Post-Communist Economies*, 13(3), 389–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631370120074894>
- Wray, K., Espiner, S., & Perkins, C. H. (2010). Cultural clash: Interpreting established use and new tourism activities in protected natural areas. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 10(3), 272–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2010.496570>

Appendix 1

Concepts after the inductive coding and conceptual refinement phases	Interim categories	Main categories
Collective forms through individual	Individual identities become part of the shared collaborative identity	Shared collaborative identity
The collaboration was made successful by the interaction of different identities		
The original mission of the collaboration was to find a common identity		
Collaboration requires going from the personal to the collective level		
Reaching a consensus on an issue depends on similar meanings	Shared collaborative identity may be perceived as a threat to individual identities	
Distracting factors are personal		
Interpersonal collaboration dominates over collaboration between different communities		
Lack of common identity between groups		
In a small community, being different creates tension	Can be physical or abstract	Collaboration platform
Place where collaboration happens		
Collaboration as a club		
Level or space for identity formation		
Collaboration takes physical form		
Community house as an expression of identity		
Social platform through study trips		
There is an important social level in the community, where everyone can participate		

(Continued)

Continued.

Concepts after the inductive coding and conceptual refinement phases	Interim categories	Main categories
Collective identity building is a long process	Collective and individual identities interact Collaboration also sometimes brings together people who do not fit together in everyday life	
Relationships between different stakeholder groups are slow to occur		
There is little collaboration between different networks and stakeholder groups	Helps keep stakeholders committed	
Even if a common story exists, there is a lack of different actor groups to systematically interpret it as an experience		
Rural tourism increasingly requires the existence of a network that transcends the boundaries of the community	Provides space for and facilitates social networking	
Network participants need moral, training, and explanatory support		
The formation of social capital through common collective ideas		
Spontaneous informal activities ensure success		



Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A, H. (2019). The tourism partnership life cycle in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 219-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>



The tourism partnership life cycle in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration

Pilving T.^{a,b,*}, Kull T.^b, Suškevičs M.^b, Viira A.H.^a

^a The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Estonia, Kreutzwaldi 1a, Tartu 51006, Estonia

^b Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Kreutzwaldi 1a, Tartu 51006, Estonia



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Rural tourism partnership
Tourism partnership lifecycle
Tourism network
Tourism partnership sustainability
Post-communist region

ABSTRACT

Estonian rural tourism partnership sustainability is analysed according to the tourism partnership life cycle model, which employs qualitative methodology. Leadership, confusing aims, decreasing communication, time availability, uncertain funding, institutional changes and lack of collaboration with urban centre – trigger deceleration of partnership and therefore influence partnership sustainability.

Social aspects play a major role in affecting partnership and include internal and external influences. While each partnership phase is important for its sustainability, the partnership can simultaneously follow different timeline paths that have formal and informal life cycles. If the partnership exists in multiple timelines, its life cycle follows a more circular than cyclical form. Community-initiated partnerships are evolving and adapting platforms where new partnership forms emerge, creating social and economic benefits for stakeholders. When collaboration is initiated by local communities, partnerships can change and alter their form more sustainably compared to situations in which they have a more centralised character.

1. Introduction

Multi-stakeholder partnerships between private, public and non-profit sector representatives are the important driving force behind the development of community-based tourism destinations (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Tourism partnerships can emerge in different settings and are well researched (e.g. Jamal & Getz, 1995; Caffyn, 2000; Kernel, 2005; Lemmetyinen & Go, 2009; Beritelli, 2011; Czernek, 2013; Jesus & Franco, 2016; Vogt, Jordan, Grewe, & Kruger, 2016; Peroff, Deason, Seekamp, & Iyengar, 2017). Previous research (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Caffyn, 2000; Jap & Anderson, 2007; Peroff et al., 2017; Ring & van de Ven, 1994) highlights that partnerships are constantly changing and they ultimately reform or come to an end. Caffyn (2000) and Peroff et al. (2017) have studied tourism partnership life cycles and aspects that influence the life cycle of networks within the context of sustainable tourism.

Estonia can be considered a developing destination in the global tourism market (Cottrell & Raadik-Cottrell, 2015). Following the restoration of its independence in 1991, when Estonia became accessible to tourists outside of the former Soviet Union, a new era of tourism began (Jaakson, 1996; Worthington, 2001) and new tourism products and services had to be found (Mihalic, 2017). Rural life changed drastically in the transition period (adapting to the new market

conditions) that followed independence. The previously dominating collective farms were privatised, agricultural land was given back to former owners or their heirs, demand for agricultural labour declined markedly, new ways for earning an income had to be found (Viira, Pöder, & Värnik, 2009) and the role of tourism increased in rural development (Unwin, 1996).

Estonian rural tourism enterprises primarily constitute micro-businesses that offer a mix of accommodation, food and active holiday services. Their main challenges include low investment capacity, seasonality and a lack of qualified staff, and most investments depend on programmes co-funded by the EU (Hillep et al., 2012). Collaboration is one way of dealing with these obstacles.

Several studies have focused on the collaboration of tourism agents in the post-communist context in Europe, namely in Bulgaria, Romania (Roberts & Simpson, 2000) and Poland (Czakov & Czernek, 2016; Czernek, 2013; Czernek & Czakov, 2016; Czernek, Czakov, & Marzsałek, 2017; Kapera, 2018; Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). However, the post-communist context varies from country to country depending on the extent of the command economy, collectivisation and private enterprise freedom during the communist era, together with the institutional reform paths chosen in the early 1990s (Lerman, Csaki, & Gershon, 2004). To our knowledge, there are no studies on rural tourism collaboration in the context of the Baltic states, where

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: tarmo.pilving@emu.ee (T. Pilving).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>

Received 10 May 2018; Received in revised form 12 February 2019; Accepted 5 May 2019

2211-9736/© 2019 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

agricultural production was centralised to collective farms that were responsible for virtually all aspects of rural life, and private (rural) enterprises did not exist until the end of the 1980s.

Strzelecka and Wicks (2015) studied the issues of social capital in local tourism planning within the LEADER framework in the region of Pomerania, Poland. This study investigates tourism partnership in Estonia and contributes to the comparison of these aspects in a separate post-communist destination and context.

The following criteria were used in selecting the appropriate partnership case for the study: multisector involvement in the area, a relatively long history, comprehensive documentation, local initiative and currently operating. A suitable partnership was identified in Pärnu county, Western Estonia, called the Romantic Coastline (RC). RC is a community-based rural tourism development and marketing project, a trademark and an umbrella for a local tourism collaboration network that was established in 2007 to promote rural tourism development in the coastal area of Pärnu county and involves stakeholders from different sectors (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, 2015).

While the tourism partnership life cycle has been studied in various contexts (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017), there are still unanswered questions regarding partnership lifetime, sustainability and the role of the environment in which the partnership exists. The tourism partnership life cycle model (TPLCM) was used in this study as a conceptual framework (Fig. 1). Since its introduction by Caffyn (2000), TPLCM has been tested in different destinations (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) but little is known about how well TPLCM explains the development of partnerships in regions where the tourism industry is not fully developed, e.g. Estonia (Cottrell & Raadik-Cottrell, 2015). In order to comprehend the evolution of collaboration and its meaning to stakeholders more effectively, it is important to study in which stages and how collaboration develops in the TPLCM timeline context (Caffyn, 2000) and to focus on the motivation of stakeholders to join, participate, contribute and exit from a collaborative network (Fyall, Garrod, & Wang, 2012). The authors of this study have assumed that the rural tourism partnership is closely related to the surrounding environment and can, therefore, have different evolution patterns than the cyclical pattern shown in previous studies (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017). In Estonia, for example, where informal collaboration between rural tourism businesses and other community members is necessary for offering services in the short tourism season (Hillep et al., 2012), the deceleration phase of a partnership can have a different ending and continuity options than described by Caffyn (2000).

In assuming that there are a wide range of interconnected

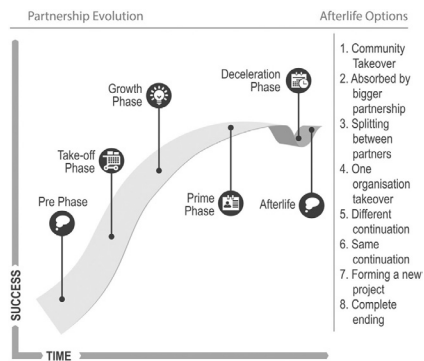


Fig. 1. Tourism partnership life cycle model (Caffyn, 2000).

stakeholders who have complex relationships with each other, a qualitative research strategy was selected for this study. This strategy allowed the authors to compare the research results with similar studies (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017). Our standpoint was that the emerging theoretical patterns should be grounded in already existing theories that are not solely derived from empirical data. Using the multi-grounded theory (MGT) as a research methodology facilitates the use of the full potential of empirical data and helps overcome the main weakness of the grounded theory – the reluctance to use pre-existing theoretical standpoints (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

This approach allowed the authors to test the validity of TPLCM in the post-communist rural environment and find new insights to explain tourism partnership development in the life cycle context. Testing the TPLCM in a post-communist context helps to broaden the theory of the processes of partnership dynamics in different environments, helps to identify previously unknown aspects that influence the development of community-based rural tourism partnership, brings new knowledge about rural tourism partnerships in the post-communist context and helps derive practical advice for tourism developers.

This study aims to analyse the deeper meanings of the evolution of partnerships over time for different partners, and it contributes to existing understanding by exploring the following research questions: (1) is the TPLCM adequate for explaining community-based rural tourism partnership life cycle development in the post-communist rural environment, (2) what partnership evolution patterns may be present other than the cyclical pattern described by Caffyn (2000), (3) what are the main aspects that influence the evolution and sustainability of multisectoral collaboration between the private, public and non-profit sectors in different partnership stages in the post-communist rural environment?

2. Theoretical framing

2.1. Rural tourism and partnerships

This study regards rural tourism as a “type of tourism where people are travelling to the rural area outside of their usual place of residence for vacation, work or another purpose” (Hillep et al., 2012, p.4). The rural area in the Estonian context is a village, borough or small town with fewer than 4000 inhabitants (Hillep et al., 2012). Many rural areas in Europe with a declining number of jobs in agriculture are nowadays being transformed into recreational and tourism areas, which places increasing importance on preserving cultural heritage and nature values (Eusébio, Carneiro, Kastenholz, Figueiredo, & da Silva, 2017). Several studies (Augustyn & Knowles, 2000; Bornhorst, Ritchie, & Sheehan, 2010; Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) have researched the aspects that influence partnership dynamics, such as funding, partner relationships, communication, leadership and the formal or informal character of the collaboration. Tourism is a social phenomenon (Merinero-Rodríguez & Pulido-Fernandez, 2016) and there could also be reasons other than economic reasons for establishing a partnership, including the nurturing of cultural heritage (Peroff et al., 2017). Therefore, aside from economic factors, social aspects also influence the success of tourism partnerships (Czernek, 2013).

The development of a tourism area requires the formation of partnerships among local stakeholders. In this study, the following partnership definition is used: “The collaborative efforts of autonomous stakeholders from organisations in two or more sectors with interests in tourism development who engage in an interactive process using shared rules, norms and structures at an agreed organisational level and over a defined geographical area to act or decide on issues related to tourism development” (Long, 1997, cited by Caffyn, 2000, p. 201).

2.2. The tourism partnership life cycle model

In her study, Caffyn (2000) compares different existing partnership

life cycle models, including Butler's (1980) tourism area life cycle model (TALC), and she develops a model suited to tourism partnerships and a theoretical framework to analyse tourism partnerships in a life cycle context (Fig. 1). The TPLCM explains that the tourism partnership progresses through the life cycle in different phases (pre, launch, growth, prime and deceleration) that follow a cyclical development pattern and finally has different options for continuity in the afterlife.

Studies on the tourism partnership life cycle (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) suggest that tourism partnerships evolve in stages suggested by TPLCM before they finally end. However, it is still not clear what happens with the collaboration in the deceleration phase when the partnership ends or changes its form. According to Peroff et al. (2017), partnerships share similarities though they do not always follow a similar life cycle pattern. Partnerships can be temporary organisations, such as a collaboration aiming to solve a specific problem (Caffyn, 2000). However, more sustainable solutions are needed from the perspective of the development of tourism destinations (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Even where the elements required for success apparently exist during early partnership phases, partnerships in different cases (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) still move towards deceleration and end with different afterlife options (Fig. 1). In evaluating partnership success and changes over the partnership life cycle, a strong focus must be on identifying the partnership timeline and associated chronological changes. This helps to identify when deceleration commences, since it can be unclear, even for the members, if and when the partnership has ended, particularly if there is no formal ending (Peroff et al., 2017).

2.3. Knowledge gaps in on existing partnership life cycle studies

When building a wide regional partnership network as a formal organisation, diverse interest groups and personnel must interact for a common purpose. When initiating partnerships, empathy based on personal relationships and individual contributions are key elements (Beritelli, 2011; Corte & Aria, 2014). Efficient networking through partnerships needs a high level of social capital building and accumulation. This requires good partner relations and a high level of trust between individuals (Czakon & Czernek, 2016). Coordinated networking helps partners in co-learning, facilitates value creation for better customer experience (Lemmetyinen & Go, 2009), increases trust among partners in development processes and, as a result, helps to overcome barriers in local development (Salvatore, Chiodo, & Fantini, 2018). Albrecht (2013) emphasises that the knowledge of multisectoral tourism networks remains limited.

In the last 100 years, three major structural breaks have occurred in Estonian rural areas due to political changes. In the 1920–30s, the lands of 1000 large manors were nationalised and more than 100,000 new small farmsteads were parcelled out. This contributed to the creation of a new social order with equitable distribution and individual control of property (Maandi, 2010). Between 1949 and 1952, primarily, the land, assets and animals of the private farms were collectivised into Soviet-style collective farms (Unwin, 1997). In 1991, the restitution of land to its pre-collectivisation owners and the privatisation of collective farms began (Viira et al., 2009; Viira, Pöder, & Värnik, 2013).

Changing political regimes can have a major influence on trust in local communities. For example, Czernek (2013) found that the short history of democracy negatively influenced trust levels in Poland. Such an experience of uncertainty in institutions can influence the willingness of stakeholders to build trust and to invest in long-term partnerships. Rapidly changing conditions can marginalise collaboration efforts (Fyall et al., 2012) and therefore undermine partnership sustainability (Roberts & Simpson, 2000).

Changing institutional conditions can also have a positive effect (new clients and investment options) on tourism, such as in 2004 when Estonia became a member of the EU (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008). Previous partnership life cycle studies (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017) do not offer clear answers about the outside influences on partnership

sustainability in the life cycle context. The fast-changing rural institutional environment can acutely influence the sustainability of the partnerships in still-developing destinations, such as Estonia. Evaluating the existing partnership in the post-communist environment using the TPLCM can highlight partnership change with the surrounding environment over different phases.

The evaluation of a partnership's performance can play a critical role in partnership sustainability. Without measurable targets, partnerships can exist but will eventually fail when trust is gone (Roberts & Simpson, 2000). The lack of impact evaluation can negatively affect trust building within the network (Czakon & Czernek, 2016). Uncertainty can weaken stakeholder motivation to participate in collaborative activities and negatively affect the creation of shared responsibility (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017). When the aims of the partnership are confusing and the large networks fragment, it can be difficult to re-vitalise the existing partnership to its former glory without new content and trust building (Caffyn, 2000). However, this can be difficult since collecting sufficient data can be time-consuming and places an extra workload on stakeholders (Peroff et al., 2017). Monitoring progress is important at every partnership stage. This must be one of the tools for achieving strategic goals. The lack of clear performance indicators can raise doubts about where the partnership is heading, leading to uncertainty among stakeholders (Caffyn, 2000). Also, communication plays an important role, as the clarity of goals for all stakeholders is important in maintaining partnership sustainability (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017). Knowledge is limited regarding collaboration entity communication to partnership members and how multisector stakeholders relate to it in different partnership phases. The clear meaning of the partnership can be important for the sustainability of the collaboration.

Another aspect that is often overlooked in tourism partnership life cycle studies is that rural tourism can often be classed as lifestyle entrepreneurship. This effectively means that the entrepreneurs are not focusing solely on income but rather on the fulfilment of their lifestyle preferences. In the lifestyle entrepreneurial setting, partnerships are mostly informal and personal relationships have a major role (Bredvold & Skalen, 2016). This can influence the motivation of stakeholders to join the rural tourism partnership and take part in different partnership activities. It is not known how this affects tourism partnership life cycle development and sustainability in post-communist destinations.

Previous research (Caffyn, 2000; Öberg, 2016; Peroff et al., 2017) has stated that partnership formalisation can make existing informal collaboration more sustainable. Formal partnership organisations should also be appropriately convened where all stakeholder interests are constantly facilitated (Kernel, 2005). Jamal and Getz (1995) have highlighted the fact that local municipalities can provide suitable convenors for partnerships. Formalising allows for assessing and assuring the collective will and aims of the collaboration in a more organised way (Selin & Chavez, 1995) and can, therefore, help to lead stakeholder relations towards more stable and clearer paths. Goal setting is important in the early stages, and the expected outcomes of the collaboration must be clear to all stakeholders. Otherwise, they can lose interest in collaboration (Peroff et al., 2017). Of course, the results can also be the opposite, i.e. formal partnerships can divide into informal partnerships. It is still not clear which collaboration development has more of an effect on partnership sustainability.

The sustainability of the partnerships in the tourism destination has clear importance for stakeholders. To be effective, the inter-organisational relationships go through multiple stages during which mutual trust is created. In the final stages, this process can transform into a stable and sustainable network. For strategic collaboration, long-term personal relationships are necessary. The process must involve capital and management as resources that are aimed to create a collaborative advantage (Webster, 1992). Trust building between the stakeholders in the collaboration is considered extremely important, but the process can be time-consuming and long-term solutions are required. From the



Fig. 2. Pärnu county in Estonia (Land Board, 2018).

rural tourism perspective, long-lasting multisectoral networking and collaboration are mandatory because different natural assets are jointly owned (beaches, parks, lakes, forests) by different stakeholders. Furthermore, long-term solutions in the collaboration relationships ensure high trust levels among the stakeholders (Fyall et al., 2012). This aspect can be highly important in the post-communist rural context, as these areas have gone through rapid socio-economical changes in recent decades.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Romantic coastline overview

The RC is located along the 250 km long coastline (Fig. 2) of Pärnu county in Western Estonia (Romantic Coastline, 2018). The total area of the county is 4810 km² and it had 82,535 inhabitants as of 8 May 2017 (including the town of Pärnu) (Statistics Estonia, 2017). The major tourist attraction in the area, the town of Pärnu, is not a part of the RC project because the project focuses solely on coastal rural areas (9 municipalities as of 2017). The municipalities located within the inland area of the Pärnu county belong to a different LEADER local action group and are therefore not members of the RC.

These 9 local municipalities formed the Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly (PBPA), a rural coordinating and development organisation and LEADER local action group (the RC owner). PBPA, established in 2003, aims to develop a balanced, sustainable rural life by developing small enterprises and using EU funding as a tool. Their main activities and objectives (Table 1) are related to rural development, business support, tourism development, creating a marketplace for selling local products and assisting stakeholders in applying for EU funding (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, 2015).

From a tourism development perspective, PBPA can be considered a destination management organisation (DMO) with two major functions: enhancing the social and economic well-being of rural communities and assisting rural tourism stakeholders in providing better experiences for their customers (Bornhorst et al., 2010). PBPA's legal form is non-profit, which means that its members give a mandate to the board to represent their interests. The board members are representatives of rural municipalities and the day-to-day activities are the responsibility of the executive director and support team. PBPA's strategy of regional development represents the stakeholders' collective will (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, 2015). According to the PBPA strategy, tourism must support other entrepreneurial activities and sectors in the region, stimulate entrepreneurship beyond the sectoral boundaries, offer benefits to wider circles of community members and include different social groups in entrepreneurial activities. There is a strong focus on local food and the promotion of the rural coastal region through related events.

The RC has 205 organisations as potential members (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, 2015) but its actual membership policy is unconventional. At the beginning of the RC, leaders held awareness-raising meetings and face-to-face conversations with possible interested parties; whilst doing so, they listed potential actors who were then considered members in forming the RC network. There was no formal membership agreement. If the organisation was registered in the RC

area and offered services connected to the goals of the RC, it was considered part of the RC network (passive membership). Being a member of the RC is free of charge, but members pay the event participant fee and marketing materials (posters, flags etc.) for joint marketing and when using the RC trademark. In 2011, there were 59 RC brand users (Kaldoja, 2011). In recent times, a voluntary goodwill agreement has been established between RC and its members to make the partnership more formal.

3.2. Research approach

Partnerships can be complex and there are various theories related to them (Fyall et al., 2012). Combined theory approaches in the co-working analysis are hard to carry out systematically because partnerships don't always follow purely rational theoretical principles (Beritelli, 2011). On the other hand, Fyall et al. (2012) highlight that focusing too much on one theoretical approach at an early stage of a study can set limitations on the overall research. Using the MGT as methodology provides a necessary tool for analysing qualitative empirical data, formulating emerging theoretical statements and helps in overcoming issues related to the grounded theory, such as over-generalisation and introvert theorising, which can cause a "reinventing the wheel" effect. The MGT helps to have a critical view over existing theoretical statements, contribute to the forming of new theoretical statements and maintain a broad perspective over the research structure and emerging grounded theoretical viewpoints in the different stages of the research (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

Purposive sampling was used in this study. A key principle of purposive sampling (Flick, 2014) was the inclusion of participants from each municipality, all three sectors, project leaders/managers, active/passive and new/old members. The interview questionnaire sought responses on three broad themes: (1) the participant's initial involvement with the RC, (2) issues surrounding their continued involvement, (3) the participant's visions regarding the RC's future.

Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection method used in this research. 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders from the following sectors: private – 15, public – 5 and non-profit – 7. At the time of the interviewing, the RC area was governed by 9 local municipalities. Because of the unconventional membership policy described above, it is difficult to say how many non-profit and private sector organisations are members of the RC. The managers of the RC mention that they try to work with all tourism stakeholders in the RC area because the RC is meant to be promoting the whole region. They estimate that there are around 60–70 active private and non-profit sector stakeholders who also use the RC brand.

The document analysis was used as an additional method. In the document analysing process, different strategy, planning and marketing documents about the RC were examined to find traces of the different partnership stages and life cycle development.

The interview questions covered a wide range of topics including the participant's role, motivation and benefits, the leader's role, project management, the forming of partnerships with others, the participant's willingness to invest their own resources in different partnership activities, EU funding, the changing role of the RC in the region, future perspectives, etc. The interviews lasted from 45 min to 2 h and were

Table 1
Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly main objectives and activities (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, 2015).

PBPA objectives	PBPA activities
Improving and developing the living environment in villages	Activities related to developing community and visitor infrastructure (community houses and the RC cafe)
Attracting young people into community development	Providing local students summer jobs and internships
Raising competitiveness of businesses	Collaboration, training and communication activities (workshops and courses)
Microbusinesses development based on local resources	Encouraging community members to participate in entrepreneurial activities (festivals, fairs and community days)
Stimulating tourism development	Tourism-related marketing and learning activities (workshops and courses)

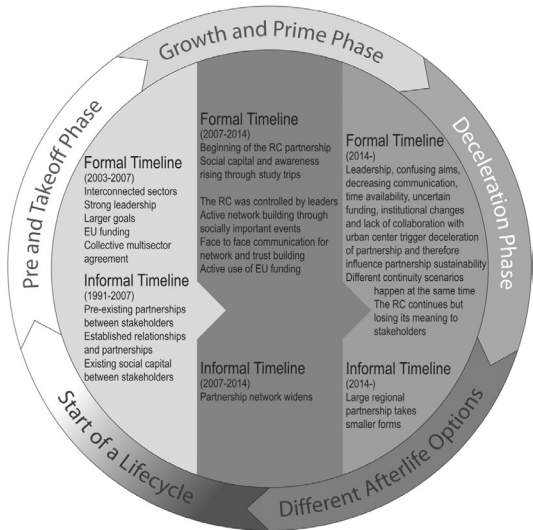


Fig. 3. Romantic Coastline partnership life cycle.

conducted between April and May 2017. All the collected data were transcribed, coded and analysed using a four-step analysis process: initial coding, conceptual refinement, pattern coding and, finally, theoretical condensation (Cronholm & Goldkuhl, 2010).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The tourism partnership timeline

Caffyn (2000) and Peroff et al. (2017) indicate that partnerships exist on a single timeline in the TPLCM phases, and Peroff et al. (2017) showed how important it is to establish a timeline for interpreting the results. Our results expanded on the subject and revealed that the partnership can simultaneously exist in multiple timelines (Fig. 3). The TPLCM phases can be identified in the strategy of the RC (Fig. 3). However, the results revealed two different timeline patterns: first, where the partnership is formalised, and second, where it exists informally.

The timeline of the formal RC partnership is stage-based and corresponds to the 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 EU funding periods (Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly, 2015). The other (informal) timeline consists of spontaneous collaborations between the stakeholders. The main aim of the RC was to bring existing informal collaborations under a single umbrella as a broad cross-community, cross-sectoral network. Informal collaboration (a collaboration between accommodation, catering and active holiday services, local markets and other small-scale events) between the rural tourism stakeholders in the study area began to evolve in 1991 when Estonia regained independence. There have been several attempts to develop a cross-regional partnership, but these attempts never reached the level of the RC. Overall, we conclude that the informal collaboration and its timeline are always present and the formal partnership with its parallel formal timeline can strengthen the informal collaboration to help it attain a new level.

Caffyn (2000) and Peroff et al. (2017) point out the temporary nature of partnerships. This study shows that partnership sustainability is closely related to the working mechanisms of regional tourism and larger institutional changes in rural life. If the collaboration occurs at the same time in formal and informal ways, the mutual coexistence of these forms can be achieved. This gives the tourism partnership a chance to overcome the problem of temporary existence without completely losing its original focus. A formal partnership was required in the RC, but it eventually gave the informal partnership more strength and opportunities to grow.

4.2. The pre- and take-off phase

Informal partnerships began to evolve in the RC area after Estonia regained its independence and long before the idea of the RC was conceived. Rural tourism moved strongly into focus in the early 2000s when it became clear that Estonia would become a member of the EU and new funding options for rural development would be available. Estonian tourism experienced major growth at that time (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008). A local activity group recognised an opportunity and pushed the existing informal collaboration forward with the aim of establishing a regional partnership to strengthen rural tourism in the RC region.

The pre-partnership phase of the RC (Fig. 3) is easily recognisable, as it was clear to the activity group from the outset that a collective agreement between the rural tourism stakeholders, local municipalities and community members was needed to develop rural tourism in the region. This collective agreement affirmed that tourism was tolerated and accepted, and everybody who wanted to participate in the collaboration was included. Existing social capital enabled a rapid start-up period.

Expectations towards collaboration differ between sectors (Viren, Vogt, Kline, Rummel, & Tsao, 2015). Motivation among the public and

non-profit sector for participation in the RC included an increase in jobs, visitors and businesses, and the sharing of tourism-related tasks. Fairs, festivals and community houses are viewed among the RC partners as local business incubators, a means to unify communities and give microbusinesses a chance to collectively use shared resources and social capital. [Fyall et al. \(2012\)](#) point out that such diversity of reasoning can impact partnership governance and legitimacy.

[Strzelecka and Wicks \(2015\)](#) highlight that local political leaders and business owners in Pomerania, Poland, were competing with each other in the LEADER local action group and the projects submitted by local leaders were approved more easily than the projects submitted by local businesses. The private and public stakeholders do not compete like this in the RC. The reason for that is the high level of interconnections between the private, public and non-profit sectors. Strong public sector control over a partnership can be a problem for partnership sustainability ([Augustyn & Knowles, 2000](#); [Caffyn, 2000](#)). A high level of interconnectivity enabled the RC to progress across three sectors. The RC stakeholders noted that network creation, establishing relationships and building trust was easier to achieve in this context because members already knew the inner workings of the different sectors. One interviewee (entrepreneur) noted the following:

"I think that all of our active community members have several occupations across different sectors. This is modern rural life in small communities and one job doesn't offer you a sufficient living. I consider this a good development because this interaction makes our community stronger, people don't cocoon themselves into small groups and decisions are much more transparent. We are developing our community together and trust each other".

The RC officially started in 2007 and had a very successful take-off phase. It was clear that real change could only be achieved through collective effort in which as many community members as possible participated. Participants agreed to join because they were already collaborating informally with others.

At the time, the partnership management was entrusted to two local leaders who were the main driving force behind the local activist group and spread the idea that tourism could be a new vision for the area.

EU funding was available for strategy implementation. The reasoning of stakeholders regarding the RC take-off phase concurs with the conclusions of [Caffyn \(2000\)](#) and [Peroff et al. \(2017\)](#): while there can be many ideas, it is impossible to implement them without funding.

4.3. Growth and prime phase

In the growth phase, the collaboration network began to enlarge and many of the informal partnerships could now be identified as members of the RC partnership. The quick growth was achieved because the majority of the stakeholders were ready for new ideas, and the leaders were constantly encouraging partners to act. The leaders organised study trips inside the RC area and abroad in order to build social capital among partners, establish relationships, raise awareness and broaden the network. A lot of explaining was done by the leaders about the RC because the name and the entity were causing confusion among some of the PBPA members. Nevertheless, some local stakeholders remained sceptical about the RC. Especially, stakeholders who were collective farm leaders in the Soviet era and still have authority in the region.

Events (local fairs, festivals and workshops) were created to build stronger communities and include locals in entrepreneurial activities. Regular communication was provided through a range of events, but the most important was that the events created the atmosphere of face-to-face communication. This was highlighted by an interviewee:

"Collaboration in rural tourism favours a personal approach".

When interviewees were asked about the benefits of partnership networking, no one mentioned expected financial gain as the sole

reason. The responses mostly concerned about social aspects and joint marketing, and examples include:

Entrepreneur: "It is interesting to participate and see what others are doing".

Head of the local municipality: "Everything that is taking place in the countryside is beneficial. I really like the workshops and being part of something".

Entrepreneur: "I like joint marketing because one small company doesn't have a big marketing budget. It is nice to be part of something because living in the Estonian countryside can be lonely in the low season".

Manager of the local community house: "The events are the main benefit for me. I just like to participate and see what others are doing".

Leaders wrote different project applications in the growth phase, and local municipalities paid their own share to the PBPA, which was used as co-financing in the RC development. In this way, many establishments were built, events created, joint marketing conducted, and festival networking started. Through the RC, municipalities could also finance their own activities focusing on community development. All of this helped to widen the existing informal partnership network in the growth phase.

Within the prime phase, social aspects began to dominate alongside entrepreneurial elements. The partners enjoyed the RC as a social movement, but several interviewees pointed out that the idea of developing the RC as a unified tourist route remained in the background due to the confusing aims. In expanding the conclusions of [Peroff et al. \(2017\)](#), this implies that social benefits to stakeholders and local communities in a post-communist environment can have a significant role when partnership success is evaluated.

One strategic aim of the RC is to develop a marketplace where stakeholders can offer their locally produced products. Interviewees highlighted that the development of the festival network as a marketplace was one of the main benefits founded under the RC umbrella. A number of studies ([Augustyn & Knowles, 2000](#); [Caffyn, 2000](#); [Peroff et al., 2017](#)) highlight the importance of proper funding in partnerships but not much is known about partnership self-funding. The festival network that was created under the RC umbrella is an example of how self-funding can be achieved in the partnership process. While EU funding was initially used, the majority of the festivals no longer require it today. Festivals are important in many respects: they provide a marketplace for locals selling their produce, community members co-operate for common goals, feelings of home and importance are strengthened, visitor numbers increase, they provide greater visibility and recognition, and many families come together for the duration of the festival.

The RC received recognition several times during the prime phase, and many study trips were organised for others to see and learn how the cross-sectoral partnerships worked on a larger scale. Even though the RC was considered a success story slowly the partnership began to stagnate.

4.4. Deceleration phase

Our results confirm [Caffyn's \(2000\)](#) findings on the role of leaders in keeping the partnership running, but the actions of the leaders can also start the deceleration. Due to the increasing internal conflicts (disagreements between the leaders of the RC and some of the PBPA members), one leader left the RC in 2010 and the other in 2014. [Beritelli \(2011\)](#) and [Fyall et al. \(2012\)](#) point out that personal relationships can strongly influence partnership development and collaboration.

Interviewees reported that the RC is no longer what it used to be,

suggesting that the RC has entered a downward spiral even though some outcomes of the RC were considered a success. Through the RC, something more valuable than merely the RC partnership has been created. The partnership network in which three sectors work together still exists, but it has moved away from the original idea. While stakeholders want to maintain the created value, they feel that the RC no longer has the same regional impelling force.

Although the RC continues, its identity and essence have changed. Common identity generation is highly important in partnership development. Identity building is process-based and can take a long time to move through all the phases of the partnership. The identity generation in the RC was necessary to provide a diverse set of stakeholders with something that they could own in common, but it resulted in a different form than was initially planned.

In Caffyn's (2000) case, the common identity was considered one of the most important achievements of the collaboration to affect partnership sustainability. It is hard to sustain partnership longevity when the main idea carriers leave the collaboration before the majority of the stakeholders achieve full connection with the identity. The partnership starts to weaken, and collaborative achievements take smaller and less complex forms.

In the decline of the RC, the region-wide formal partnership started to divide into more local events, and service packaging between partners became more important (than the RC as a regional tourist route) to the stakeholders (Fig. 3). Originally, it was planned that events were part of the RC physical presence in the area. Instead, they started their own life without a strong RC identity.

Theoretically, it is possible to end the partnership in the prime phase, but it will start to decelerate at some point if it continues. There are numerous reasons why partnerships start to decline (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017). This study shows that if a partnership exists simultaneously in multiple timelines, the differences between prime, deceleration and afterlife phase are not that clear. The formal partnership was slowing down at the end of the prime phase. Formally, the RC is still operational. The interest of stakeholders in it has declined because they couldn't properly relate to the essence of the RC. However, they are still strongly motivated to participate in the local informal collaboration. With the self-financing local event network, regional partnerships have now started another life cycle that is moving in parallel with the declining RC. This indicates that the RC helped to bring informal collaboration and rural tourism to the next level. Local stakeholders need a new formal regional partnership in order to take the next leap in rural tourism development.

Entrepreneur: "Rural tourism stakeholders will always collaborate. The RC was a good accelerator and the EU funding helped to push rural tourism forward, but these big partnerships will always end someday. How we continue is important. When the RC finally ends, it will leave behind stronger connections and collaboration between local stakeholders and this will be a good ground for new, big partnership projects. In my opinion, we need to forget the RC and make a new project to properly collaborate with the city of Pärnu".

Local municipality representative: "The RC was a good start for us, and we learned how to collaborate more successfully, but these partnerships must evolve into new partnerships. We must take all that is important from each partnership and pass that on to future partnership projects".

Entrepreneur: "Without the RC we would have never started with the local festivals, and right now we need to focus on the festival network development, such as making a tourist route that really works and offers something in the low season. If somebody comes up with an interesting new partnership idea, I will most certainly join. I collaborate with other businesses in our village in everyday business activities, but it is important to be part of something bigger".

According to the TPLCM, different continuity scenarios are possible

in the deceleration phase (Caffyn, 2000). This study discovered that continuity scenarios can start much earlier, and there is no need to reach the end of formal partnership for a change to happen. When comparing different RC afterlife possibilities, it unexpectedly emerged that several continuity options could occur simultaneously while the partnership was still operational. It seems the RC network has already started another life cycle based on regional community events like festivals, fairs and occasional packaging, implying that the RC was slowly dividing into smaller parts in the deceleration. It can be said that the informal collaboration that existed before the RC was taken to the next level by the RC. Without the RC, this outcome would never have been attained. Implementing this vision required additional funding and expert knowledge offered by the RC network.

From a TPLCM perspective, this outcome suggests different simultaneous after-life options. Although the RC idea came from the leaders and spread to other community members, the new life cycle process is not exactly a community takeover during the partnership afterlife as described by Caffyn (2000); instead, it represents stronger community involvement in a multisectoral collaboration that initially existed. When tourism at the regional level is based on partnerships initiated from local communities, then collaboration can develop and change into different forms in a more sustainable way compared to more centralised partnerships (Caffyn, 2000; Peroff et al., 2017).

The future of the RC owner organisation (PBPA) is uncertain. Interviewees noted that the PBPA will lose its meaning in the region if EU funding decreases. Stakeholders are willing to invest their own resources in joint marketing and a festival network, but funding for a DMO must come from elsewhere. Partnerships that are based on EU funding are, in essence, temporary when other financing instruments are not properly implemented before the funding changes. The partnership sustainability depends on clear planning where assessment and constant clear funding have a high priority (Caffyn, 2000).

4.5. Key aspects precipitating the RC deceleration

Several indicators may indicate the starting point of the partnership deceleration (Caffyn, 2000). We found seven aspects precipitating deceleration of the RC partnership.

4.5.1. Absence of any proper evaluation of RC benefits and influence

The ensuing debate in the PBPA questioned spending on tourism when it was impossible to link this to the growth of regional visitor numbers. Without measurable benefits, stakeholder scepticism can rise (Czernek, 2013). Visitor numbers in Pärnu county have been growing steadily since 2007 (Statistics Estonia, 2017). However, the impact of the RC as a tourist route to these numbers was never assessed. According to the opinions of the interviewees, the direct effect of the RC on visitor numbers is marginal. The interviewees highlight that despite the extensive marketing that was undertaken over the years to promote the RC as a tourist route, the idea never gained traction and visitors don't know what the RC is.

As explained by one entrepreneur: "I have been a project member from the beginning, but I cannot say that there are many clients coming through the RC. There are more important channels, such as [booking.com](https://www.booking.com). Sometimes my clients ask about the orange tree logos that are the RC trademark, but they know nothing about the RC. This trademark or tourist route doesn't bring me any clients".

Another entrepreneur noted: "Of course, local events are really popular, and I see more and more visitors every year at festivals, but local organising committees do their own marketing. The idea of the RC as one unifying roof or umbrella never began to work properly, and the workshops and meetings didn't help in solving seasonality. So, for local tourism businesses, the impact of the RC is not noteworthy today".

Public sector representative: “The festivals nowadays attract visitors, not the RC. I think that we must change our focus”.

The majority of the visits take place in the local hotspot of the town of Pärnu (not part of the RC), and almost all of the interviewees note that the town is attracting a completely different tourist segment (spa and beach visitors) to whom it is difficult to offer rural tourism services. Several interviewees point out that they tried to offer services to the city's visitors, but these attempts failed.

In this case, members who did not understand tourism benefits initially agreed with the stakeholder majority but, in the absence of clear measurable results, they voiced their concerns which lead to embarrassment. A salient minority who are not satisfied with the results but has great power can have a significant impact on organisational development (Fyall et al., 2012) and a major influence on achieving necessary consensus among stakeholders (Saito & Ruhanen, 2017). As a result, the power relationships inside the RC became unbalanced.

4.5.2. Lack of proper supportive team

The leaders of the RC focused on management without a proper support team and were the main carriers of the original idea. The belief of the leaders in success was so strong that it provided the spark to stimulate others, but the concept of such a non-material entity like a network or partnership is hard to grasp. Even the hard work of explaining the idea did not help to reduce the scepticism of several stakeholders of the PBPA. The interviewees noted that the RC has fulfilled its purpose, aims and that momentum has gone into broadening the original agenda or finding a new focus on the same project. In this case, the collective responsibility on a large scale was not achieved (Peroff et al., 2017) and even when the RC reached some of the main objectives (region-wide partnership and festival network) the stagnation continued. As explained by one entrepreneur:

“Much was achieved through this project but now it is time to move on. Another thing here is that not everybody who lives in our community is suited to participating in tourism. I think that we need to focus more widely than just on tourism”.

Diverse interest groups can be an obstacle in collaboration (Czernek, 2013) and it is essential that different interests are brought together (Kernel, 2005); otherwise, stakeholder interest in participating in voluntary collaboration activities decreases and this reduces the levels of shared responsibility (Peroff et al., 2017). The RC consists of many interest groups that are difficult to unite under one specific idea and is mainly managed by two local leaders. For example, the focus of the RC was moving more towards rural food, and handicraft makers felt that they didn't receive enough attention.

4.5.3. Dependence on external funding

Despite self-financing being achieved in some local partnership activities (festivals and fairs), the local action group PBPA is still dependent on EU funding. There is an uncertainty about developments after 2020 when the current EU funding period (2014–2020) ends, and thus the future prospects of the PBPA are unclear. The respondents highlight that it is almost impossible to get a bank loan or venture capital into the rural tourism sector, and the EU funding helped to create infrastructure for public use and develop non-profit activities in local communities. The stakeholders worry that the quality of rural life could decline without extra funding. They are also concerned that rural areas can't remain dependent on EU funding and more sustainable solutions are required.

4.5.4. Lack of time for participation in voluntary activities

Stakeholders in rural areas are engaged in so many different activities that finding time can be a real issue in participating in voluntary partnership activities. This has a major influence on the ability and will of stakeholders to participate in region-wide partnerships. In addition

to being active with tourism activities in the summer, many stakeholders have primary or secondary employment elsewhere, e.g. in the public or non-profit sector. This limits their available time and ability to participate in voluntary activities. Interviewees preferred voluntary activities that they see as having clear benefits for their community, provide opportunities for socialising with other people or where they can offer services or products to clients (local festivals).

4.5.5. Lack of communication

Communication levels fall after the departure of leaders. “Communication intensity and ease of getting in contact support trust and understanding” (Beritelli, 2011, p.623). Due to the lack of communication, many stakeholders started to feel confused about the status of the RC, which consequently created distance between stakeholders and the RC, with some participants now feeling insufficiently involved. Communication is not only about partnership development; it also has a social value. Some members see the RC as a club where they can regularly meet with others. When meetings become less frequent, they lose interest. Communication is a key element in collaboration, and a lack of confidence in the future can develop and affect trust without it (Caffyn, 2000).

4.5.6. Institutional changes in rural life

The interviewees indicated that municipal reform will have a big influence on rural regions because local community governance is being centralised and is moving away from villages into the county centre. This was compared to Soviet times when collective farms were formed, and the decision making became more centralised, thereby lowering trust in officialdom. According to Czernek (2013), the short history of democracy influenced trust levels in Poland. Recent municipal reform in Estonia has been compared to the Soviet time when political decisions led to increased centralisation. This reduces trust levels in government and makes rural life, in general, more unstable, which can have a long-term impact on rural tourism and partnerships.

4.5.7. Lack of collaboration with the urban centre

Collaboration between the town of Pärnu and the RC has never functioned properly. Pärnu is a popular tourist destination, but it attracts a completely different tourist segment (spa and beach visitors) who are not interested in visiting neighbouring rural areas. When Estonia regained independence, the county and town were going in a similar direction (focusing mostly on tourism) but at different speeds and without a proper joint strategy.

4.6. Circular development of the partnership life cycle

If a partnership exists in multiple (informal and formal) timelines, its life cycle follows a circular rather than a cyclical pattern. If the pre-existing informal collaboration becomes part of the larger formal partnership in a starting phase, the formal collaboration divides again into smaller informal collaborations during the deceleration phase. This latter phase of the process can be considered the beginning of a new life cycle, where the informal collaborations will exit the formal partnership with more social capital than at the time of their entry. Furthermore, informal collaboration can only evolve to a certain level. To overcome the barrier of development, the formation of a new large partnership with new aims is necessary. This process is circular – formal partnership starts creating value for stakeholders and empowers the informal collaboration required for tourism development. When the formal partnership has fulfilled its aims, it decelerates. When the time is ready, a new formal partnership starts with a new life cycle that aims to create new value for the stakeholders and informal collaboration. One interviewee (entrepreneur) explains:

“The RC was launched in order to take local rural tourism entrepreneurship to the next level, and I think that this was a success.

It was good to use the EU funding and create extra value for the region. But the market conditions have changed. The RC was established a long time ago, and today it would be wise to exit the project and think about a new cross-regional partnership that is more customised to our current needs and market conditions and less dependent on EU funding”.

Formal regional partnerships evolve more easily in the phase where ending or change is necessary because they are influenced more by the surrounding unstable institutional environment. This study shows that the start of the formal regional partnership network in the rapidly changing and unstable post-communist rural conditions takes place when there are favourable conditions in the surrounding environment and decline when this environment changes. There have been several major institutional and political changes in recent decades that have had a major impact on rural life in the study area: further collective farm aggregation in the 1970s (Tõstamaa, 2018), Estonia regaining independence, ownership, land and agricultural reforms, Estonia becoming an EU member and the opening of LEADER funding, the financial crisis, confusion about EU funding after 2020 and municipal reform.

A major change in the institutional environment can have a quick and positive impact on tourism, such as Estonia's accession to the EU created an accession effect and accelerated the development of the tourism industry. However, the effect did not last for long (Jarvis & Kallas, 2008). This example shows that these major institutional changes can have a turbulent influence on the rural environment. Of course, the influence can also be negative, as interviewees highlighted the municipal reform and its influence on destroying the home feeling. It follows that resources required for informal collaboration (personal relationships, social capital and trust between local people) are more constant (because people in the area remain the same) compared to the major institutional changes. If these resources exist at a high level in the rural community where the partnership takes place, then the collaboration will develop more sustainably.

Local resources including local human and social capital, nature, culture environment and identity form the core (pre-conditions) for tourism collaboration. Formal partnerships develop and evolve around this core. The resources inside the core affect the success and stability of these partnerships. For example, existing strong informal collaboration, a strong local identity and cultural values are a good starting point for establishing formal collaboration.

At the same time, formal collaboration is influenced by the surrounding institutional and political environment (e.g., municipal reform, a reduction in EU funding, etc.), along with management and leadership of the partnership. The rural tourism partnership that is initiated by local communities but is framed in an outside institutional environment (in this case, LEADER funding) can use the benefits offered by this environment, act as a tool to bring the informal collaboration to the next level and strengthen the resources inside the core.

When the partnership has fulfilled its aims and the outside environment changes, the partnership decelerates because the marginal benefit of the partnership to the resources inside the core becomes lower. This implies that the stakeholders need a new formal partnership project that is more adapted to the changing conditions and starts to add new value to the resources inside the core. This is the point when the circle closes and starts another loop.

5. Conclusions

This research analysed a community-initiated rural tourism partnership life cycle and its sustainability in the post-communist environment in Estonia. The results indicate that the partnership network can simultaneously follow different timeline paths (formal and informal). Every partnership life cycle stage can be significant for sustainability. Partnership continuity scenarios can start in different

timeline phases before the partnership declines.

The tourism partnership initiated by the local community in a developing post-communist destination exists in multiple timelines and evolves in a more circular than cyclical form. Thus, for a better comprehension of partnerships in different contexts, awareness of the existence of multiple collaboration layers and timelines must be considered to understand the phenomena more comprehensively.

There are also internal (e.g. measurable targets, time availability and personal relationships) and external (e.g. EU funding and political decisions) aspects that have a major effect on partnership sustainability. Formal partnerships are influenced by outside institutional changes and are in essence temporary. Partnerships can only be as strong as the frame of extra values that they deliver to the members. Partnerships can help to raise local informal collaboration to the next level, create a new entity for local rural tourism and strengthen connections between local stakeholders. When the partnership aims are fulfilled, they will decelerate and at that point, a new formal partnership is necessary for entrance to the next level.

The vulnerability of a partnership increases when: (1) implementing the idea is strongly based on leading individuals, (2) the aims are confusing, and the results are not measured, (3) communication decreases, (4) stakeholders lack time to participate in voluntary activities, (5) funding is uncertain, (6) institutional changes raise uncertainty in rural areas, (7) lack of collaboration with urban centre.

Regional tourism partnership networks focusing on community interests can exist simultaneously in both formal and informal forms as a type of evolving and adapting platform system where new partnership cooperation emerges, creating social and economic benefits to both stakeholders and local communities alike. Different continuity scenarios can occur at the same time when the partnership is in decline. In this case, the partnership network begins to sub-divide into smaller partnerships during deceleration, with each of which commencing their own new cycles.

The influence of tourism in a rural region can be wider than for the tourism sector itself. Tourism in such cases offers social benefits that are as important as the partnership outcomes: empowering vulnerable social classes, uniting community members and families, giving residents a sense of place and feelings of homeliness, gatherings for social entertainment and making rural people feel useful and needed.

If there is additional funding available in the early partnership stages, this can help to achieve partial self-funding.

This research has limitations. The study is based on one regional case and focuses on one particular partnership. Further cases should be analysed in different contexts in order to establish a more general theory about the evolution of the circular partnership life cycle. The tourism partnership life cycle model needs to be tested in different environments in order to accumulate more knowledge about the aspects that influence partnership development in multiple timelines and the impact on partnership sustainability.

Author contribution

Tarmo Pilving: Main author. Produced main conceptual ideas, literature review, research design and planning of the data collection, table and figures, collected and analysed data.

Tiiu Kull: Contributed to the development of conceptual ideas, research design and planning of the data collection, table and figures.

Monika Suškevičs: Contributed to the development of conceptual ideas, research design and planning of the data collection, table and figures.

Ants-Hannes Viira: Contributed to the development of conceptual ideas, research design and planning of the data collection, table and figures.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>.

References

- Albrecht, J. N. (2013). Networking for sustainable tourism – Towards a research agenda. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(5), 639–657. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2012.721788>.
- Augustyn, M. M., & Knowles, T. (2000). Performance of tourism partnerships: A focus on York. *Tourism Management*, 21(4), 341–351. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(99\)00068-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00068-0).
- Bertelli, P. (2011). Cooperation among prominent actors in a tourist destination. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(2), 607–629. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.11.015>.
- Bornhorst, T., Ritchie, J. B., & Sheehan, J. L. (2010). Determinants of tourism success for DMOs & destinations: An empirical examination of stakeholders' perspectives. *Tourism Management*, 31(5), 572–589. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.06.008>.
- Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2000). Collaboration and partnerships in tourism planning. In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 230–246). Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Brevold, R., & Skalen, P. (2016). Lifestyle entrepreneurs and their identity construction: A study of the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 56, 96–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.03.023>.
- Butler, R. W. (1980). The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution: Implications for management of resources. *Canadian Geographer*, 24(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.1980.tb00970.x>.
- Caffyn, A. (2000). Is there a tourism partnership life cycle? In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 200–229). Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Romantic Coastline (2018, January). Welcome to romantic coastline. Retrieved from <http://www.rannatee.ee/parnu-estonia>.
- Corte, V. D., & Aria, M. (2014). Why strategic networks often fail: Some empirical evidence from the area of Naples. *Tourism Management*, 45, 3–15. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2192>.
- Cottrell, S., & Radick-Cottrell, J. (2015). Editorial: The state of tourism in the Baltics Special issue. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(4), 321–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2015.1081798>.
- Cronholm, S., & Goldkuhl, G. (2010). Adding theoretical grounding to grounded theory: Toward multi-grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9(2), 187–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069100090205>.
- Czakon, W., & Czernek, K. (2016). The role of trust-building mechanisms in entering into network cooperation: The case of tourism networks in Poland. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 57, 64–74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2016.05.010>.
- Czernek, K. (2013). Determinants of cooperation in a tourist region. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 40, 83–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2012.09.003>.
- Czernek, K., & Czakon, W. (2016). Trust-building processes in tourist cooperation: The case of a polish region. *Tourism Management*, 52, 380–394. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.07.009>.
- Czernek, K., Czakon, W., & Marzalek, P. (2017). Trust and formal contracts: Complements or substitutes? A study of tourism collaboration in Poland. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6(4), 318–326. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdm.2017.07.001>.
- Eusebio, C., Carneiro, M. J., Kastenholz, E., Figueiredo, E., & da Silva, D. S. (2017). Who is consuming the countryside? An activity-based segmentation analysis of the domestic rural tourism market in Portugal. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 31, 197–210. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2016.12.006>.
- Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research* (5th ed.). London, UK: SAGE.
- Fyall, A., Garrod, B., & Wang, Y. (2012). Destination collaboration: A critical review of theoretical approaches to a multi-dimensional phenomenon. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 10–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdm.2012.10.002>.
- Hillep, P., Pärnamets, R., Trubetskoj, E., Ender, J., Eik, L., Viin, T., ... Peil, N. (2012). Maaturismi uuring 2012 [Rural Tourism Research 2012]. Estonia: Põllumajandusministeerium. Retrieved from https://www.agri.ee/sites/default/files/public/juurkatalog/UURINGUD/uuring_maaturism_2012.pdf.
- Jaaskson, R. (1996). Tourism in transition in post-soviet Estonia. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(3), 617–634. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(95\)00131-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(95)00131-1).
- Jamal, T. B., & Getz, D. (1995). Collaboration theory and community tourism planning. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22, 186–204. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(94\)00067-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(94)00067-3).
- Jap, S. D., & Anderson, E. (2007). Testing a life-cycle theory of cooperative inter-organizational relationships movement across stages and performance. *Management Science*, 53(2), 260–275. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1060.0610>.
- Jarvis, J., & Kallis, P. (2008). Estonian tourism and the accession effect: The impact of European Union membership on the contemporary development patterns of the Estonian tourism industry. *An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment*, 10(4), 474–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616680802434080>.
- Jesus, C., & Franco, M. (2016). Cooperation networks in tourism: A study of hotels and rural tourism establishments in an inland region of Portugal. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 29, 165–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2016.07.005>.
- Kaldjoja, E. (2011). Brändi "Romantiline Rannatee" kasutus ja arenguperspektiiv sihtkohapiirkonna toote- ja teenusepakkujate seas [The brand "Romantic Coastline" functionality and development perspectives among the service providers in the destination]. Retrieved from [https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=GwjKw6LUAYbrgTjDlUwCQ&q=Brändi+\"Romantiline+Rannatee\"+kasutus+ja+arenguperspektiiv+sihtkohapiirkonna+toote+ja+teenusepakkujate+seas+&aq=Brändi+\"Romantiline+Rannatee\"+kasutus+ja+arenguperspektiiv+sihtkohapiirkonna+toote+ja+teenusepakkujate+seas+&gs_l=pay-ab.3...2892.0.4580.4.2.0.0.0.0.1.0...0...1c.2.64-pay-ab.3.1.83.6.3539k1.83.qA35M8.cK.2](https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=GwjKw6LUAYbrgTjDlUwCQ&q=Brändi+\).
- Kapera, I. (2018). Sustainable tourism development efforts by local governments in Poland. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 40, 581–588. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2018.05.001>.
- Kernel, P. (2005). Creating and implementing a model for sustainable development in tourism enterprises. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 13, 151–164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2003.12.023>.
- Land Board. (Cartographer). Eesti kaart [Map of Estonia]. (2018). Retrieved from https://xgis.maaamet.ee/maps/XGis?app_id=U082A&user_id=at&LANG=1&WIDTH=1066&HEIGHT=632&zlevel=0 (552500,6505000).
- Lemmetyinen, A., & Go, F. M. (2009). The key capabilities required for managing tourism business networks. *Tourism Management*, 30, 31–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.04.005>.
- Lerman, Z., Csaki, C., & Gershon, F. (2004). *Agriculture in transition. Land policies and evolving farm structures in post-soviet countries*. Lanham, USA: Lexington Books254.
- Long, P. (1997). Restructuring tourism partnerships organisations: From practice to theory to methodology. In P. E. Murphy (Ed.), *Quality management in tourist tourism*. Chichester, NY: Wiley.
- Maandl, P. (2010). Land reforms and territorial integration in post-soviet Estonia, 1918–1940. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 36(4), 441–452. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2010.03.005>.
- Merinero-Rodríguez, R., & Pulido-Fernández, J. I. (2016). Analysing relationships in tourism: A review. *Tourism Management*, 54, 122–135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.10.010>.
- Mihalic, T. (2017). Redesigning tourism in CEE countries: The main areas of change and the communist past. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 3(3), 227–242.
- Öberg, C. (2016). What creates a collaboration level identity? *Journal of Business Research*, 69, 3220–3230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.02.027>.
- Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly (2015). *MTÜ Pärnu Laine Partnerluskoja tegevusprogrammi strateegia 2014–2020 (Strategy of the Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly 2014–2020)*. Audru, Estonia: Pärnu Bay Partnership Assembly. Retrieved from http://www.plp.ee/ee2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=425&Itemid=5&lang=et.
- Peroff, D. M., Deason, G. G., Seekamp, E., & Iyengar, J. (2017). Integrating frameworks for evaluating tourism partnerships: An exploration of success within the life cycle of a collaborative ecotourism development effort. *Journal of Recreation and Tourism*, 17, 100–111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2016.10.001>.
- Ring, P. S., & van de Ven, A. H. (1994). Developmental processes of cooperative inter-organizational relationships. *The Academy of Management Review*, 19(1), 90–118. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258836https://www.jstor.org/stable/258836>.
- Roberts, L., & Simpson, F. (2000). Developing partnership approaches to tourism in Central and Eastern Europe. In B. Bramwell, & B. Lane (Eds.), *Tourism collaboration and partnerships: politics, practice and sustainability* (pp. 230–246). Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Saito, H., & Ruhnen, L. (2017). Power in tourism stakeholder collaborations: Power types and power holders. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 31, 89–196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2017.01.001>.
- Salvatore, R., Chiodo, E., & Fantini, A. (2018). Tourism transition in peripheral rural areas: Theories, issues and strategies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 68, 41–51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2017.11.003>.
- Selin, S., & Chavez, D. (1995). Developing an evolutionary tourism partnership model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22, 844–856. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(95\)00017-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(95)00017-X).
- Statistics Estonia (2017, May). Pärnu Maakond [Pärnu County]. Retrieved from <https://www.stat.ee/ppe-parnu-maakond>.
- Strzelecka, M., & Wicks, B. E. (2015). Community participation and empowerment in rural post-communist societies: Lessons from the leader approach in Pomerania, Poland. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 12(4), 381–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1013564>.
- Tõstamaa (2018). Tõstamaa ajalugu [the history of Tõstamaa]. Retrieved from http://www.tostamaa.ee/client/default.asp?wa_id=69.
- Unwin, T. (1996). Tourist development in Estonia: Images, sustainability, and integrated rural development. *Tourism Management*, 17(4), 265–276. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(96\)00018-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(96)00018-4).
- Unwin, T. (1997). Agricultural restructuring and integrated rural development in Estonia. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 13(1), 93–112. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167\(96\)00053-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(96)00053-8).
- Vilra, A. H., Pöder, A., & Värnik, R. (2009). 20 years of transition- institutional reforms and the adaptation of production in Estonian agriculture. *Agrarwirtschaft*, 58(7), 286–295.
- Vilra, A. H., Pöder, A., & Värnik, R. (2013). The determinants of farm growth, decline and exit in Estonia. *German Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 62(1), 52–64.
- Viren, P. P., Vogt, C. A., Kline, C., Rummel, A. M., & Tsao, J. (2015). Social network participation and coverage by tourism industry sector. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 4, 110–119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdm.2015.03.004>.
- Vogt, C., Jordan, E., Grewe, N., & Kruger, L. (2016). Collaborative tourism planning and subjective well-being in a small island destination. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5, 36–43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdm.2015.11.008>.
- Webster, F. E. (1992). The changing role of marketing in the organization. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(4), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1251983https://www.jstor.org/stable/1251983>.

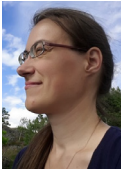
Worthington, B. (2001). Riding the 'J' curve—Tourism and successful transition in Estonia? *Post-Communist Economics*, 13(3), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631370120074894>.



Pilving, T is a PhD student in the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences and junior researcher in the Chair of Biodiversity and Nature Tourism in Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU). His research focuses on multisector tourism collaboration and partnership networks and community, rural and social entrepreneurship in rural and nature-based tourism. He teaches environmental sociology, global nature tourism and tourism research methodology. He is involved as a teacher and project partner with several European Union Erasmus+ learning projects e.g. Social Entrepreneurship for Local Change and Community Learning for Local Change.



Kull, T is a professor in biodiversity and nature tourism in Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU), Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Recently a successful doctoral project was completed on her supervision titled "Virtual reality in support of sustainable tourism: experiences from eastern Europe". For ten years she has been responsible for teaching nature tourism at BSc and MSc levels in Estonian University of Life Sciences. Throughout her career, her research has focused on biodiversity conservation, plant population biology, also on carrying capacity of ecosystems and in more recent years on nature-based tourism.



Suškevičs, M is a lecturer and post-doctoral researcher of qualitative methodologies and participatory environmental governance at EMU. In her PhD (completed 2014) she compared case studies on multi-level ecological network governance in selected countries across the European Union. Via two systematic reviews, her post-doctoral research focused on the impact and outcomes of different learning approaches (such as social learning, transformative learning or policy learning) on natural resource management. Currently, she is studying participatory approaches around the Green Infrastructure planning and its interfaces with the ecosystem services concept.



Viira, A H is a senior researcher of agricultural economics at the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences of the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU). He has worked on the issues of structural development of agriculture and rural economy, and agricultural and rural policies for 10 years. His main research interests have been related to the socioeconomic determinants of farm growth, decline and exits, and competitiveness of the dairy supply chain. In recent years his research has focused on the role of innovation policy in the sustainable development of agriculture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My biggest thanks go to my supervisors, Ants-Hannes Viira, Prof. Tiit Kull, and Assist. Prof. Monika Suškevičs for their constant support, advice, and partnership.

I am grateful to my colleagues from Estonian University of Life Sciences for their advice, help and support.

My greatest thanks goes to all the study participants and Estonian tourism stakeholders, especially in the Pärnu region and Lahemaa National Park. Without you there would not be this study.

My greatest thanks goes to my family. I would like to thank my wife Margit for being so patient and helpful when needed and my son Oskar for inspiration.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Tarmo Pilving
Date of birth 10.09.1980
Phone +372 56 602 911
E-mail tarmo.pilving@emu.ee

Institutions and positions

07.09.2016-present Estonian University of Life Sciences, Junior Researcher (1.0)

Education

01.09.2013-16.06.2015 master's degree (MSc), Estonian University of Life Sciences

Academic degrees

Tarmo Pilving, Master's Degree, 2015, (sup) Lea Sudakova; Aivar Ruukel, Sustainable development and ecotourism as a way for Estonian nature-based tourism, Estonian University of Life Sciences.

Tarmo Pilving, Phd student, (sup) Ants-Hannes Viira; Tiit Kull; Monika Suškevičs, Collaboration in Estonian rural tourism, Estonian University of Life Sciences.

Completed projects

P170057MSDS "Research topic" Sustainability of the Estonian agricultural sector and new challenges in changing market and environmental conditions (1.01.201-31.12.2018), Ants-Hannes Viira, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Institute of Economy and Social Sciences.

VX 139 ERASMUS+ "Social Entrepreneurship for Local Change" (01.09.2015-31.08.2018), Simon Bell, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Ongoing projects

VX180011PKEL ERASMUS+ “Community Learning for Local Change” (01.09.2018-31.08.2021), Roger Gilchrist Evans, Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Environmental Investment Centre 17467 “Impacts of recreational, sports and tourism activities in protected areas – mapping of activities, interest groups and sites and development of recommendations for visitor management”, (26.06.2020-2022), Marika Kose, Kadri Erit, Tarmo Pilving.

Supervised dissertations

- Kersti Sillaots, Master’s Degree, 2020, (sup) Tarmo Pilving, Reisibüroode roll loodusturismi elamuse vahendamisel (The role of travel agents in resell nature tourism), Estonian University of Life Sciences.
- Katrin Heinsaar, Master’s Degree, 2020, (sup) Tarmo Pilving; Kalev Sepp, Reisimotivatsioon ja seda mõjutavad tegurid Soome fotograafiahuviliste reisijate näitel (Travel motivation and the influential factors. An examination of Finnish photographic travellers to Estonia), Estonian University of Life Sciences.
- Margot Eimla, Master’s Degree, 2020, (sup) Tarmo Pilving, Eesti maa- ja loodusturismi ettevõtjate valmisolek võõrustada vähemusgruppidesse kuuluvaid külastajaid (Readiness of Estonian rural and nature tourism entrepreneurs to host visitors of minority groups), Estonian University of Life Sciences.
- Piret Rabakukk, Master’s Degree, 2019, (sup) Tarmo Pilving; Tiit Kull, Jahiturismi olemus ja potentsiaal Eestis (The essence and potential of hunting tourism in Estonia), Estonian University of Life Sciences.
- Margot Lindpere, Master’s Degree, 2019, (sup) Tarmo Pilving, Loodusgiidide koolitamine Eestis (Nature guide tuition in Estonia), Estonian University of Life Sciences.

- Ahti Lill, Master's Degree, 2019, (sup) Tarmo Pilving, Nutirakenduste kasutamine loodusradadel-ja turismis: külastajate andmete kogumine ja nende kasutamine (Using smart applications on nature trails and tourism: collection and use of visitor data), Estonian University of Life Sciences.
- Marjaana Rim, Master's Degree, 2018, (sup) Tarmo Pilving, Loodusturismi mahu ning nõudluse ja pakkumise hindamine Eesti ametliku turismipotaali Visitestonia/Puhkaeestis näitel (Nature tourism size, demand and supply relation evaluation on the example of Estonian official tourism site Visitestonia/Puhkaeestis), Estonian University of Life Sciences.
- Kaisa Linno, Master's Degree, 2017, (sup) Tarmo Pilving, Kohaliku kogukonna kaasatus Lahemaa turismikorraldusse, Estonian University of Life Sciences.

Publications

2021

Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Creating shared collaborative tourism identity in a post-communist environment. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2021.1893214>

Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Diverse networks in regional tourism: rural and urban collaboration perspective. *European Journal of Tourism Research*.

2019

Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2019). The tourism partnership life cycle in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 219-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>

2018

Pilving, Tarmo (2018). Private forest as a nature tourism resource. *Sinu Mets*, 51, 6–7.

Subject courses

- 1) Nature Tourism in the World
- 2) Environmental Sociology
- 3) Basics of Nature Tourism
- 4) Guide service and occupational safety in nature tourism
- 5) Nature tourism research seminar
- 6) Implementation of small tourism projects
- 7) Research methods
- 8) From business ideas to start-ups
- 9) Entrepreneurship in Landscape Architecture

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Üldandmed

Tarmo Pilving

Sünniaeg: 10.09.1980

Telefon: +372 56 602 911; e-post: tarmo.pilving@emu.ee; aadress: Jahu 1-100. 10415, Tallinn

Haridus

01.09.1997-15.06.2000 Keskkharidus, Akadeemia Nord Õigusgümnaasium

01.09. 2010-19.06.2013 Bakalaureusekraad (BSc), Maaülikool (loodusturism)

01.09.2013– 18.06.2015 Magistrikraad (MSc), Maaülikool (loodusturism)

Teaduskraadid

Tarmo Pilving, magistrikraad, 2015, (juh) Lea Sudakova; Aivar Ruukel, Säästev areng ja ökoturism kui arengusuunad Eesti loodusturismi ettevõtetele, Eesti Maaülikool.

2016–... Tarmo Pilving, doktorant, (juh) Ants-Hannes Viira; Tiit Kull; Monika Suškevičs, Koostöö Eesti maaturismis, Eesti Maaülikool.

Töökohad ja ametid

07.09.2016–... Eesti Maaülikool, Nooremteadur (1.0)

Teaduspublikatsioonid

2021

Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Creating shared collaborative tourism identity in a post-communist environment. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*.

Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Diverse networks in regional tourism: rural and urban collaboration perspective. *European Journal of Tourism Research*.

2019

Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2019). The tourism partnership life cycle in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 219-230.

2018

Pilving, Tarmo (2018). Eramets kui loodusturismiressurss. *Sinu Mets*, 51, 6–7.

Teadus- ja õppeprojektid

P170057MSDS “Teadusteema „Eesti põllumajandussektori jätkusuutlikkus ja uued väljakutsed muutuvates turu- ja keskkonnatingimustes” (1.01.2017–31.12.2018), Ants-Hannes Viira, Eesti Maaülikool, Majandus- ja sotsiaalinstituut.

VX 139 ERASMUS+ ‘Social Entrepreneurship for Local Change’ (01.09.2015-31.08.2018), Simon Bell, Põllumajandus- ja keskkonnainstituut.

VX180011PKEL ERASMUS+ ‘Community Learning for Local Change’ (01.09.2018-31.08.2021), Roger Gilchrist Evans, Põllumajandus- ja keskkonnainstituut.

KIK projekt 17467 “Rekreatiivsete, sportlike ja turismitegevuse mõjud kaitsealadel - tegevuste, huvigruppide ja tegevuspaikade kaardistamine ning külastuskorralduslike soovitude väljatöötamine” (26.06.2020-2022), Marika Kose, Kadri Erit, Tarmo Pilving.

2020-1-EE01-KA203-077886 ERASMUS+ ‘Joint Master’s Curriculum in Rural Community Development’, (01.11.2020-31.08.2022).

Muu teaduskorralduslik ja erialane tegevus

2019/2020

a) 5th World Research Summit for Hospitality and Tourism Conference (13-16.12.2019), Ameerika Ühendriigid, Orlando, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, suuline ettekanne teemal 'Learning collaboration in the adaptive co-management environment: example from Lahemaa National Park in Estonia'.

b) Elurikkuse ja Loodusturismi Õppetooli seminar (jaanuar 2020), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal 'Learning collaboration in the adaptive co-management environment: example from Lahemaa National Park in Estonia'.

c) Elurikkuse ja Loodusturismi Õppetooli seminar (Paul Eagles, 09.03.2020), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal 'Learning collaboration in the adaptive co-management environment: example from Lahemaa National Park in Estonia'.

d) EMÜ III loodusturismi konverents "Loodusturism ja looduskaitse" (10.03.2020), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal "Külastustrendidest kaitsealadel. Laiast maailmast Lahemaale".

e) EMÜ III loodusturismi konverents "Loodusturism ja looduskaitse" (10.03. 2020), konverentsi korraldamises osalemine. Post-konverentsi õppekäigu korraldamine Lahemaa rahvusparkis.

2018/2019

a) 4th Tourism Research Network PhD/ECR Symposium 2019 (14-15.05.2019), Suurbritannia, Sheffield Hallam ülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal 'The Tourism Collaboration Identity Model'.

b) PKI doktorantide aastakonverents 2018 (21.11.2018), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal 'The common identity generation in the rural tourism collaboration network', konverentsi viimase osa modereerimine.

c) Tarmo Pilvingu doktoriseminar (04.03.2019), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal ‘The Tourism Collaboration Identity Model: the example from Estonia’.

d) Elurikkuse Ja Loodusturismi Õppetooli Doktoriseminar (02.04.2019), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal ‘Synergy or discord in regional tourism collaboration between rural-urban stakeholders in Estonia’.

e) 14th Annual Conference of the Estonian Economic Association (EMS) (31.01-01.02.2019), Pühajärve, posterettekanne teemal: The Tourism Collaboration Identity Model.

f) ADAPTER Koostööfestival 2018 (01.11.2018), Tallinna Ülikool, suuline liftikõne teemal “Loodusturism”.

g) Õpilaskonverents “Noored Lõuna-Eesti turismis” (20.11.2018), Tartu Kutschariduskeskus, suuline ettekanne teemal “Loodusturismi arengutest”.

h) Loodusturismi konverentsi “Eesti loodus turismimajanduses” korraldamine (13.03.2019), Maaülikool.

i) ATTA (Adventure Travel and Trade Association) ‘Adventure Guides Standards Workshop’ töötoa korraldamine (12.03.2019), Maaülikool.

2017/2018

a) 3rd Tourism Research Network PhD/ECR Symposium 2018 (26-27.04.2018), Suurbritannia, Sheffield Hallam ülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal: ‘The tourism partnership life cycle model in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable and socially important multisectoral rural tourism collaboration’.

b) Sümpoosion ‘International Symposium on Social and Rural Entrepreneurship – Research and Practice’ (26.10.2017), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal: ‘Rural Tourism Collaboration Network Support and Benefits for Local Communities. Integrating different social groups into entrepreneurial activities. Romantic Coastline Project Case Study in Pärnu County Estonia’.

c) „Era, avaliku ning kolmanda sektori koostöö Eesti maaturismis” (7.03.2018), Maaülikool, suuline ettekanne teemal: “The tourism partnership life cycle model in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable and socially important multisectoral rural tourism collaboration”.

d) Osalemine konkursil “Teadus kolme minutiga”.

e) Osalemine paneelis sümposiumil “Teadlased kirjutavad eesti keeles”.

f) konverentsi “Loodusturismi võimalused ja väljakutsed Eestis” organiseerimine ja selle raames töötoa “Loodusturismi ressurss, maht ja kasu” läbiviimine ja korraldamine.

Lõputööde juhendamised

Bakalaureusetööd

- Maria-Heleen Hiie, bakalaureusekraad, 2016, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Marika Kose, Eesti siseveekogude loodusturismi potentsiaal ja pakkumine, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Kalev Sepp, bakalaureusekraad, 2018, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Varjeturism Eestis: võimalused ja potentsiaal, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Anett Nurm, bakalaureusekraad, 2018, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Loodusturismi eriala tudengite loodud praktikabaasi juhtumiuuring “Letsgolahemaa” näitel, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Alar Härm, bakalaureusekraad, 2019, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Looduses ellujäämine: X- ja Y-generatsiooni teadmiste ja oskuste võrdlus, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Aleksander Gustav Tõnisson, bakalaureusekraad, 2018, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Nutirakendused ja nende potentsiaal Eesti loodusturismi ettevõtetele, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Rene Levin, bakalaureusekraad, 2018, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Erivajadusega looduses: Külastajate ootused elamusele ja vajadused taristule, Eesti Maaülikool.

- Raido Roostalu, bakalaureusekraad, 2018, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Elamustransport Lahemaa rahvuspargis: kogukonna ja külastaja ühendamine uudes teenuses, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Silver Koemets, bakalaureusekraad, 2018, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Turismimagnetite mõju teistele ettevõtetele Lääne-Virumaa piirkonnas, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Martin Tikk, bakalaureusekraad, 2019, (juh) Tarmo Pilving; Helle Kont; Marika Kose, Looduskeskuste turismipotentsiaal ja võrgustumine avalikkusele suunatud teenuste pakkumises, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Merili Trumm, bakalaureusekraad, 2019, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Tarbijate teadmised ökomärgistest turismis, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Emerson Siimer, bakalaureusekraad, 2020, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Eesti elamustoitlustuskultuuri olemus ning elamuse osa toitlustuses, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Gerli-Claudia Kuldsaar, bakalaureusekraad, 2020, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Targa turismisihatkoha arendamine läbi Tartu rattaringluse, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Brigitta Tool, bakalaureusekraad, 2020, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Liha ja taimsete alternatiivtoodete süsiniku jalajälje teadvustamise mõju tarbijakäitumisele, Eesti Maaülikool.

Magistritööd

- Kersti Sillaots, magistrikraad, 2020, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Reisibüroode roll loodusturismi elamuse vahendamisel, Eesti Maaülikool
- Katrin Heinsaar, magistrikraad, 2020, (juh) Tarmo Pilving; Kalev Sepp, Reisimotivatsioon ja seda mõjutavad tegurid Soome fotograafiahuviliste reisijate näitel, Eesti Maaülikool
- Margot Eimla, magistrikraad, 2020, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Eesti maa- ja loodusturismi ettevõtjate valmisolek võõrustada vähemusgruppidesse kuuluvaid külastajaid, Eesti Maaülikool

- Piret Rabakukk, magistrikraad, 2019, (juh) Tarmo Pilving; Tiiu Kull, Jahiturismi olemus ja potentsiaal Eestis, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Margot Lindpere, magistrikraad, 2019, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Loodusgiidide koolitamine Eestis, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Ahti Lill, magistrikraad, 2019, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Nutirakenduste kasutamine loodusradadel-ja turismis: külastajate andmete kogumine ja nende kasutamine, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Marjaana Rim, magistrikraad, 2018, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Loodusturismi mahu ning nõudluse ja pakkumise hindamine Eesti ametliku turismipotaali Visitestonia/Puhkaeestis näitel, Eesti Maaülikool.
- Kaisa Linno, magistrikraad, 2017, (juh) Tarmo Pilving, Kohaliku kogukonna kaasatus Lahemaa turismikorraldusse, Eesti Maaülikool.

Õppetöö

- a) Loodusturism maailmas, PK. 0805, 4 EAP, loengud 20h ja seminarid 20h (vastutav õppejõud).
- b) Keskkonnasotsioloogia, PK. 1010, 3 EAP, loengud 20h ja seminarid 10h (vastutav õppejõud).
- c) Loodusturismi alused, PK. 1148, 4 EAP, 2 loengut 4h ja praktikum 8h (kaasõppejõud).
- d) Giiditeenus ja tööohutus loodusturismis, PK. 1587, praktikum 4h (kaasõppejõud).
- e) Loodusturismi uurijaseminar, PK. 1625, 2 EAP, loengud 4h (alates 01.09.2020 vastutav õppejõud).
- f) Turismi väikeprojektide elluviimine, PK. 1674, 2 EAP, praktikumid 4h (kaasõppejõud).
- g) Uurimistöö meetodid, MS.0825, 7,5 EAP (kaasõppejõud)
- h) Äriideedest iduettevõteteni, PK.1719, 5 EAP (kaasõppejõud).
- i) Ettevõtlus maastikuarhitektuuris, PK.1636, 3 EAP (kaasõppejõud)

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1.1 – Articles indexed by Thomson Reuters Web of Sciences or Scopus

I Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, & M., Viira, A. H. (2021). Diverse networks in regional tourism: rural and urban collaboration perspective. *European Journal of Tourism Research*.

II Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2021). Creating shared collaborative tourism identity in a post-communist environment. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2021.1893214>

III Pilving, T., Kull, T., Suškevičs, M., & Viira, A. H. (2019). The tourism partnership life cycle in Estonia: Striving towards sustainable multisectoral rural tourism collaboration. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 219-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.05.001>

VIIS VIIMAST KAITSMIST

PAUL FRIDTJOF MÓTSKÜLA

ELEKTRO- JA PILTDIAGNOSTIKA TÄIENDAVAL RAKENDUSED KOERTE
SÜDAMEHAIGUSTE DIAGNOOSIMISEL NING PROGNOOSIMISEL
CONTRIBUTION TO THE DIAGNOSIS AND PROGNOSIS OF CANINE CARDIAC
DISEASE THROUGH ELECTRODIAGNOSTICS AND DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING
Professor **Toomas Orro**, Professor **Virginia Luis Fuentes** (The Royal Veterinary College, UK),
Professor **David Connolly** (The Royal Veterinary College, UK) ja doktor **Ranno Viitmaa**
8. märts 2021

JONATHAN MARTIN WILLOW

TIAKLOPRIIDI, TAIMSETE EETERLIKE ÕLIDE JA KAHE-AHELALISE RNA
RAKENDAMISE VÕIMALUSED HIILAMARDIKATE KESKKONNASÄÄSTLIKUS
TÕRJES
EXAMINING THIACLOPRID, ESSENTIAL OILS AND DOUBLE-STRANDED RNA
FOR POTENTIAL USE IN BIOSAFE MANAGEMENT OF POLLEN BEETLE
Professor **Eve Veromann**, professor **Guy Smagghe**
12. aprill 2021

MARIA SOONBERG

GRUPEERIMISE MÕJU PIIMALEHMADE KÄITUMISELE JA HEAOLULE
REGROUPING EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOUR AND WELFARE OF DAIRY COWS
Professor **David Arney**, doktor **Marko Kass** ja professor **Tanel Kaart**
26. aprill 2021

MARIANA MAANTE-KULJUS

VIINAPUU (VITIS SP) SAAGI KÜPSUSNÄITJAD
MATURITY PARAMETERS OF GRAPEVINE (VITIS SP) YIELD
Professor **Kadri Karp**, dotsent **Leila Mainla**, dotsent **Ele Vool**
24. mai 2021

BURAK ÖGLÜ

KLIIMAMUUTUSTE JA TEISTE ÖKOLOOGILISTE TEGURITE MÕJU VALITUD
KALALIHKIDE POPULATSIOONIDELE JA KALAPÜÜGILE EESTI SUURJÄRVEDES
IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER ECOLOGICAL FACTORS ON
SELECTED FISH POPULATIONS AND FISHERY IN ESTONIAN LARGE LAKES
Tanel Kaart, Külli Kangur, Fabien André Daniel Cremona
28. mai 2021